Better Homes & Gardens

HOME Handbook™

THE CLEANING & ORGANIZING ISSUE

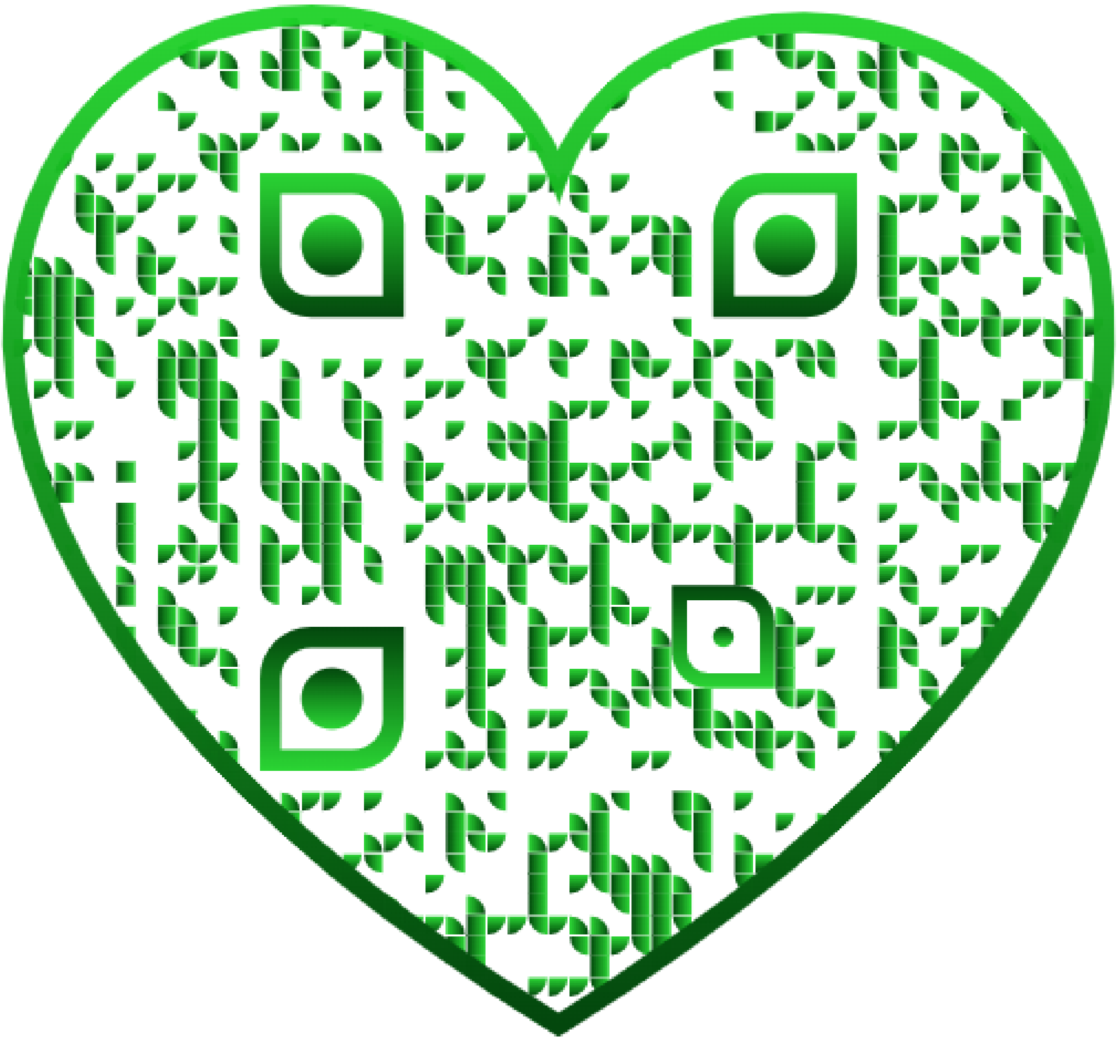
SPRUCE UP EVERY SPACE

Spring Cleaning
SPEEDY ROOM-BY-ROOM ROUTINES

MUDROOM + STORAGE + LAUNDRY
THE POWER OF COMBO SPACES

NEW IDEAS TO DITCH CLUTTER FOR GOOD!

2025



Better Homes and Gardens
REAL ESTATE

THIS MAGAZINE HELPS TURN YOUR HOUSE INTO A HOME. BUT FIRST,

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WHAT'S AHEAD

Organizing truism: Things won't get lost if they have a designated spot.

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PHOTOGRAPHER **JASON DONNELLY**
STYLIST **KATE MALO**

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A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

I'LL ADMIT IT: I'M NOT A FAN OF CLEANING. BUT ORGANIZING IS MY JAM. Walk into my one-bedroom apartment and you'll see I've utilized almost every nook and cranny. A slim cart stashes laundry supplies next to the washer/dryer, my shoes fit on stackable racks by the HVAC unit, and an added upper shelf in my only closet holds cube bins with decor and gifts. It's tight—but it works. As we assembled this issue of *Home Handbook*, which offers simple cleaning solutions and actionable organizing ideas, I couldn't help but admire others' smart use of space.

In our cover story ("The Do-It-All Room," *page 26*), one writer knew her family needed more storage, so she added a multifunctional mudroom with plenty of cabinets—and a few extra to grow into. Similarly, Monica Chavez utilized her incredible DIY skills ("Family Function," *page 78*) to outfit her family's builder-grade home with exactly what they need—don't miss the kids playroom under the stairs! And sometimes a space just needs some rethinking to make it shine. Designer Jeni Wright saw potential in a dark basement ("Sorting the Laundry," *page 86*). Thrifted cabinets, paint, and flooring transform the cold room into an inviting spot to accomplish chores.

I really shouldn't hate on cleaning. After all, we provide manageable ways to spruce every spot in your home, whether you want an elbow-deep scrub ("Spring Clean," *page 4*) or quick pickup tips ("Prep for Drop-In Guests," *page 18*). Plus, you can trust the products we suggest—our editors and The Lab, our product testing facility, vet every vacuum, broom, and toilet brush.

We hope these pages give you the motivation to dust off some cobwebs, organize a closet, or rethink a space in your home. I plan to do a bit of all three—but especially the cobwebs part.

—EMILY ELVERU
EDITOR, *HOME HANDBOOK*™

PHOTOGRAPHS: KELSEY HANSEN; PRODUCER: CLEANING PRODUCTS, JENI WRIGHT

HOME Handbook
THE CLEANING & ORGANIZING ISSUE™

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SPRING CLEAN

The all-the-little-things handbook to deep cleaning your home.

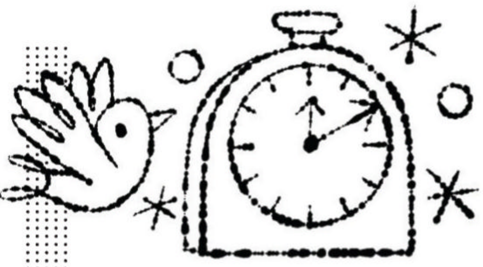
FIRST THINGS FIRST

SPRING CHANGE-UPS

- **CEILING FAN** Flip the fan's switch so blades rotate counterclockwise—better for spring and summer cooling.
- **FIREPLACE DAMPER** Close it to keep AC-cooled air in and critters out.
- **WINDOWS** Replace storm windows with screens.
- **GUTTERS** Clear the way for spring showers.
- **DETECTORS** Test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.

PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE CLEANING

Open your blinds, sit back, and relax. One study found that bacteria reproduces almost 50 percent slower in sunny rooms versus dark.



"CLEANERS THAT DISINFECT SHOULD SIT FOR AT LEAST **10 MINUTES** TO GET THE JOB DONE"

Then wipe each surface with a different cloth to prevent cross contamination.

Becky Rapinchuk, author of *Clean Mama's Guide to a Healthy Home*

[TOOL TLC]

MICROFIBER

The material really is an all-purpose, no-chemicals-required cleaning hero. But the cloths need tender-loving cleaning too.

■ Wash and dry separately. Other items can transfer a ton of lint and hair. ■ Launder in hot water and skip fabric softener and dryer sheets. They gum up the super-grabby fibers.

OXO Good Grips Microfiber Floor Duster, $22; *kohls.com* »

RULES TO CLEAN BY

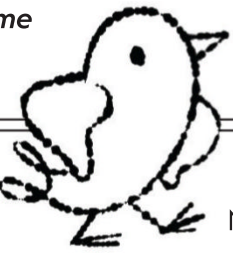
WORK TOP TO BOTTOM

This way dust and dirt won't land on freshly cleaned surfaces.

CLEAN LIKE WITH LIKE

For instance, do all the bathrooms at one time so you gather supplies only once.

Cinara Neukirchen, owner of The Sisters Home Services and a pro at *thumbtack.com*



3 TIMES TO WALK AWAY

MICROWAVE

Nuke a bowl of water for five minutes, then let it sit inside for 30. The steam loosens debris so it wipes off with a wet sponge.

COFFEEMAKER

Brew a pot of equal parts white vinegar and water. Stop the cycle halfway and let sit for an hour before completing. Then run water cycles three times.

OVEN

Bake a pan of water for 30 minutes at 350°F. Once the oven is cool, go after spills with a scouring pad. Still have buildup? Run the self-cleaning mode.

WRITER **CAYLIN HARRIS** ILLUSTRATOR **EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM**

PHOTOS: JACOB FOX, HENRY WORTOCK; SOURCE: "DAYLIGHT EXPOSURE MODULATES BACTERIAL COMMUNITIES ASSOCIATED WITH HOUSEHOLD DUST" BY THE BIOLOGY AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

93

PERCENT OF PEOPLE SKIP DEEP CLEANING THEIR BEDROOM.

JOIN THE OTHER 7 PERCENT AND START WITH THE BED. "Dirt and dust get trapped under there," Neukirchen says. "I pull out the bed from the wall and vacuum or use a microfiber mop."

FOR THE MATTRESS Vacuum with the upholstery attachment (small head, no bristles) to grab dust mites, pet dander, and bagel crumbs.

It vacuums and washes multiple hard surfaces, including grout.

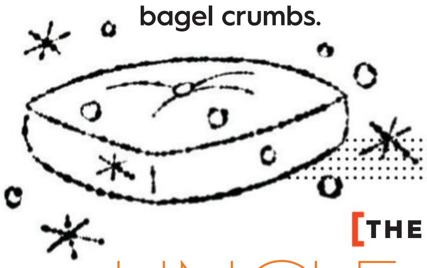
Roborock Dyad Pro Wet Dry Vacuum, $450; *amazon.com*

[REFRESH]

CURTAINS

Throw them in the dryer with a damp cloth and wool dryer balls.

The cloth dewrinkles and freshens; the balls nab dust and pet hair.



[THE FIX]

UNCLEANABLE CUSHIONS

Upholstery that unzips for a spin in the washer is what dreams are made of. For everything else:

Whisk 2 cups water, 3 Tbsp. dish soap, and 3 Tbsp. vinegar into a foam. Apply the foam from edge to edge across the cushion, then wipe off with a cloth. "The foam application prevents water droplet spots," says Courtenay Hartford, author of *The Cleaning Ninja*.

PERSONALIZED APPROACH

CARPET CLEANING

Choose your flooring adventure.

I'M DUE FOR AN ALLOVER CLEAN AND...

I'LL TACKLE IT MYSELF

Run your vacuum slowly in alternate directions over carpets to pull up maximum dirt. Hit area rugs too, but turn off the bristles for suction only. New shampooers are increasingly user-friendly and offer fast dry times, making them a good investment if you have lots of carpeting or it gets high traffic.

I WANT TO HIRE A PRO

I HAVE WALL-TO-WALL CARPET

Carpets can hold onto indoor air pollutants, so using a pro to deep clean at least every 18–24 months can remove allergens in addition to dirt and stains. Also, pros usually help move furniture.

I HAVE AREA RUGS

Check sites like Home Advisor that vets local experts. Or Detroit Rug Restoration (*detroitrug restoration.com*) sends a prepaid sleeve to mail in your rug. They offer repair services too.

I ONLY NEED TO SPOT CLEAN AND...

THE STAIN IS FRESH

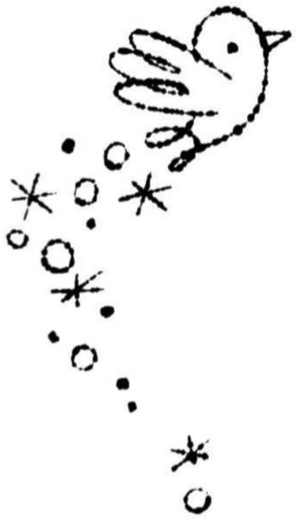
Blot, blot, blot with a clean cloth and water. For stubborn stains, Donna Smallin, author of *Clear the Clutter, Find Happiness,* uses **Spot Shot** ($9; *truevalue.com*). "It doesn't leave a residue that attracts dust or dirt to itself."

IT COULD BE ANYTHING

Smallin uses a DIY steam technique: Spray the stain with 3% hydrogen peroxide. Cover with a damp white towel and iron on lowest steam setting at 10-second intervals until stain transfers to towel. Spray again. Cover with a dry towel held down with something heavy. Let dry overnight.

IN GOOD TIME

Pets, kids, or a warranty may demand more-frequent cleanings.



PERSONALIZED APPROACH

TOOL UPGRADES

A few specially chosen products can ease your load and save time.

GIVE ME MORE POWER AND...

ONE TOOL TO TACKLE IT ALL

MCCULLOCH HEAVY-DUTY STEAM CLEANER
$150; *kohls.com*
This steamer comes with tons of attachments for different surfaces—even the window tracks you forgot to scrub last spring.

I HAVE PETS

DUSTBUSTER PET CORDLESS HAND VACUUM
$100; *blackand decker.com*
Reach tight nooks where hair and fur tend to cluster using the crevice tool, or swap in the upholstery attachment to clean your sofa or drapes. The powerful suction can even slurp up rogue kibble bits.

Rubber bristles pick up stubborn hair without it tangling in the bristles. Small attachments reach anywhere.

I'M OUT OF ELBOW GREASE AND...

MY FLOORS ARE A MESS

CLOROX SCENTIVA DISINFECTING WET MOPPING CLOTHS
$10; *amazon.com*
Wet sheets fit Swiffer-style mops and have texture to scrub big stuff and disinfectant for tiny viruses and bacteria.

I NEED A SUPER SCRUBBER

SCOURING PADS
Mr. Clean Magic Erasers remain our go-to for walls, but for paint drips, shoe scuffs, or any surface that's not a mirror finish, use

SCRUB BUDS
$7 for four; *amway.com*
Dishwasher safe and won't rust.

COCONUT SCOURING PAD
$5 for two; *grove.co*
Nonabrasive and biodegradable.

I LIKE ECO-CLEANERS AND...

I WANT TO GRAB AND GO

LOVE HOME AND PLANET MULTIPURPOSE CLEANER SPRAY
$14; *amazon.com*
Use: All over.
Why: Plant-based, ethically sourced ingredients; amazing scents.

AUNT FANNIE'S CLEANING WIPES
$9; *aunt fannies.com*
Use: kitchens, bathrooms, high chairs. Why: Vinegar-base formula won't wipe out good bacteria.

PURACY STAIN REMOVER
$8; *puracy.com*
Use: On fabric or upholstery.
Why: Plant-based formula skips harsh chemicals.

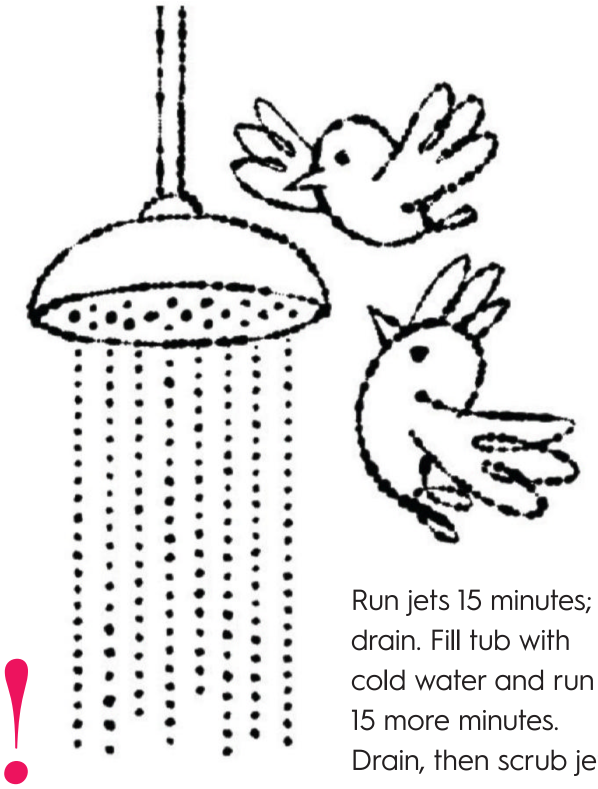
DIY IS MY MIDDLE NAME

SPRAY BOTTLE
$19; *muddhouse mercantile.com*
Recipes listed on the bottle.

SAL SUDS BIODEGRADABLE CLEANER
$10; *drbronner.com*
An all-natural multipurpose cleaner to use on dishes, floors, and even laundry.

GERMS AND BACTERIA AND MINERAL DEPOSITS

OH MY!



Spa jets and showerheads, especially plastic ones, can hang onto germs and gross gunk.

- **SPA JETS** Rapinchuk advises filling the tub to 3 inches above jets with hot water; add 4 Tbsp. powdered dishwasher detergent and ½ cup vinegar. Run jets 15 minutes; drain. Fill tub with cold water and run 15 more minutes. Drain, then scrub jets with a toothbrush.
- **SHOWERHEADS** Attach a plastic bag filled with vinegar to the fixture with a rubber band. Soak overnight.

[FINALLY]

A toilet brush to get excited about.

OXO Toilet Brush with Rim Cleaner—emphasis on rim cleaner ($28; *oxo.com*).

»

SHOWER CURTAINS

Put mats and shower curtains (even the liner) in the washer. Air-dry anything plastic or rubber. Toss the cloth curtain in the dryer but remove while it's a little damp and rehang to prevent wrinkles.

STRAIGHT TO THE SUDS SOURCE

If an oily film or soap scum consistently builds up on glass shower doors, try switching to plant-based body soap.

[STAINLESS STEEL]

For a quick shine, wipe with vinegar on a microfiber cloth, then buff with a few drops of olive or almond oil. For big messes or—gasp!—persistent fingerprints, break out the **Weiman's Stainless Steel Wipes** ($9; *weiman.com*).

No matter what, wipe with the grain.

3 BEAUTY TOOLS THAT MULTITASK

- **COTTON BALLS AND COTTON SWABS** Dunk in rubbing alcohol to disinfect crevices and small areas.
- **HAIR DRYER** Blow cool air to dust plants and delicate decor.
- **TOOTHBRUSH** Scrub, scrub, scrub away!

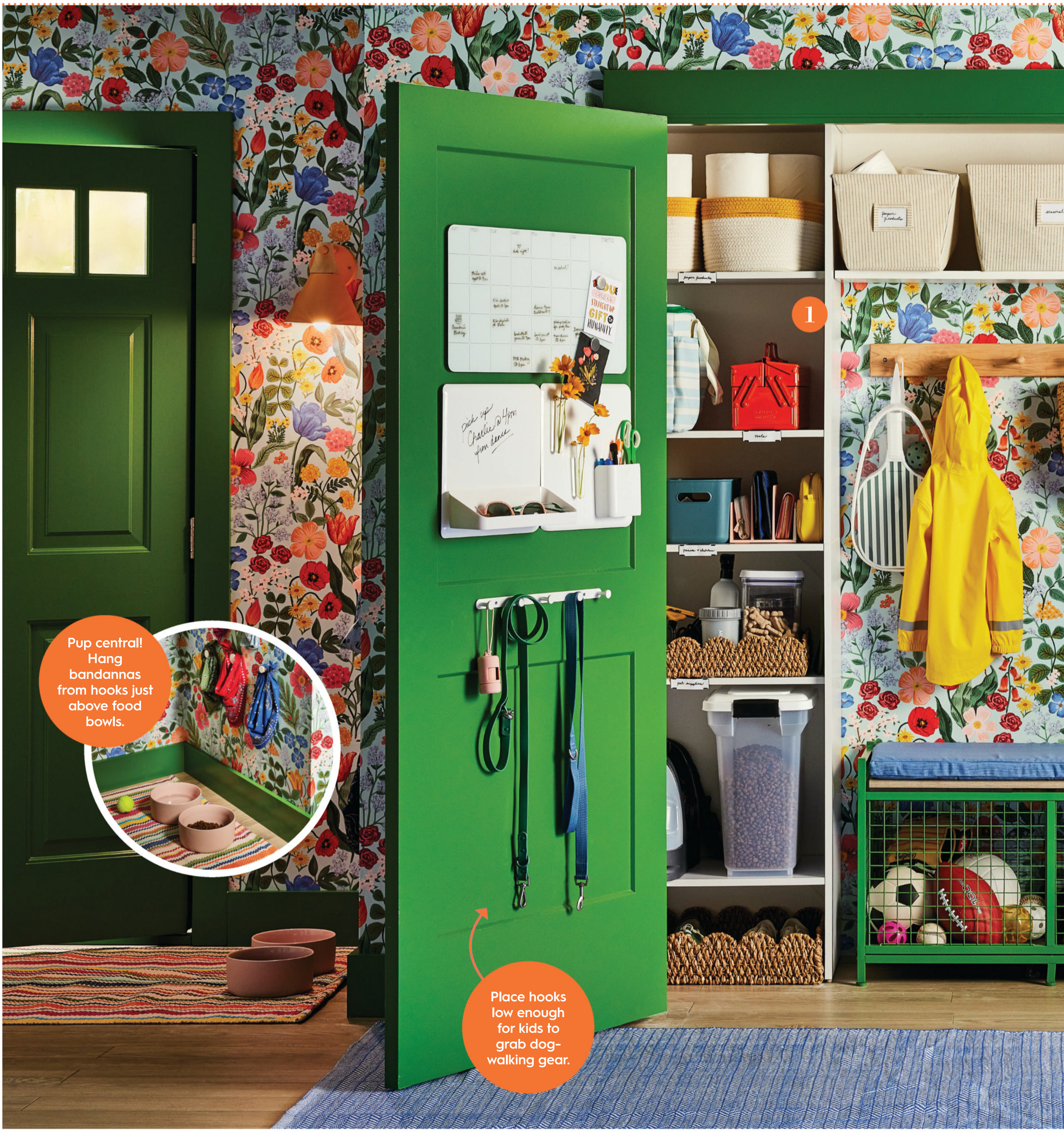
BAKING SODA

I'M SUPPOSED TO CLEAN VENT HOOD FILTERS?

Big-time. Hartford recommends soaking them in a sinkful of hot or boiling water and a cup of baking soda until the water cools. Rinse, dry, replace.

ONE-STOP STORAGE

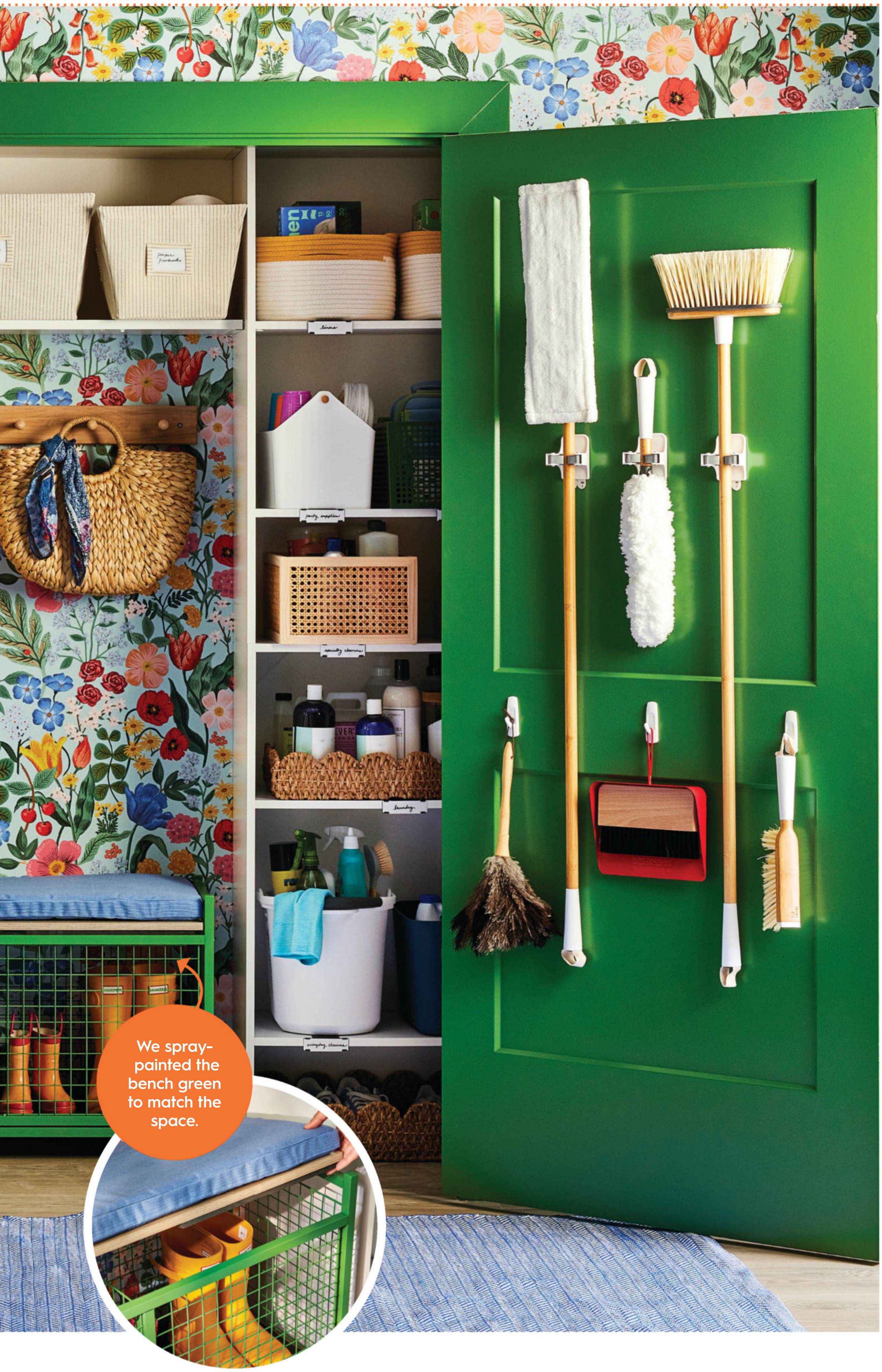
WRITER **KELLY ROBERSON** PHOTOGRAPHER **KELSEY HANSEN** PRODUCER **JENI WRIGHT**


1
pick up
Charlie @ 4pm
from dance

Pup central! Hang bandannas from hooks just above food bowls.

Place hooks low enough for kids to grab dog-walking gear.

The front closet often becomes a catchall for, well, everything. We outfitted a standard space with smart organizing solutions so each item has a home.



We spray-painted the bench green to match the space.

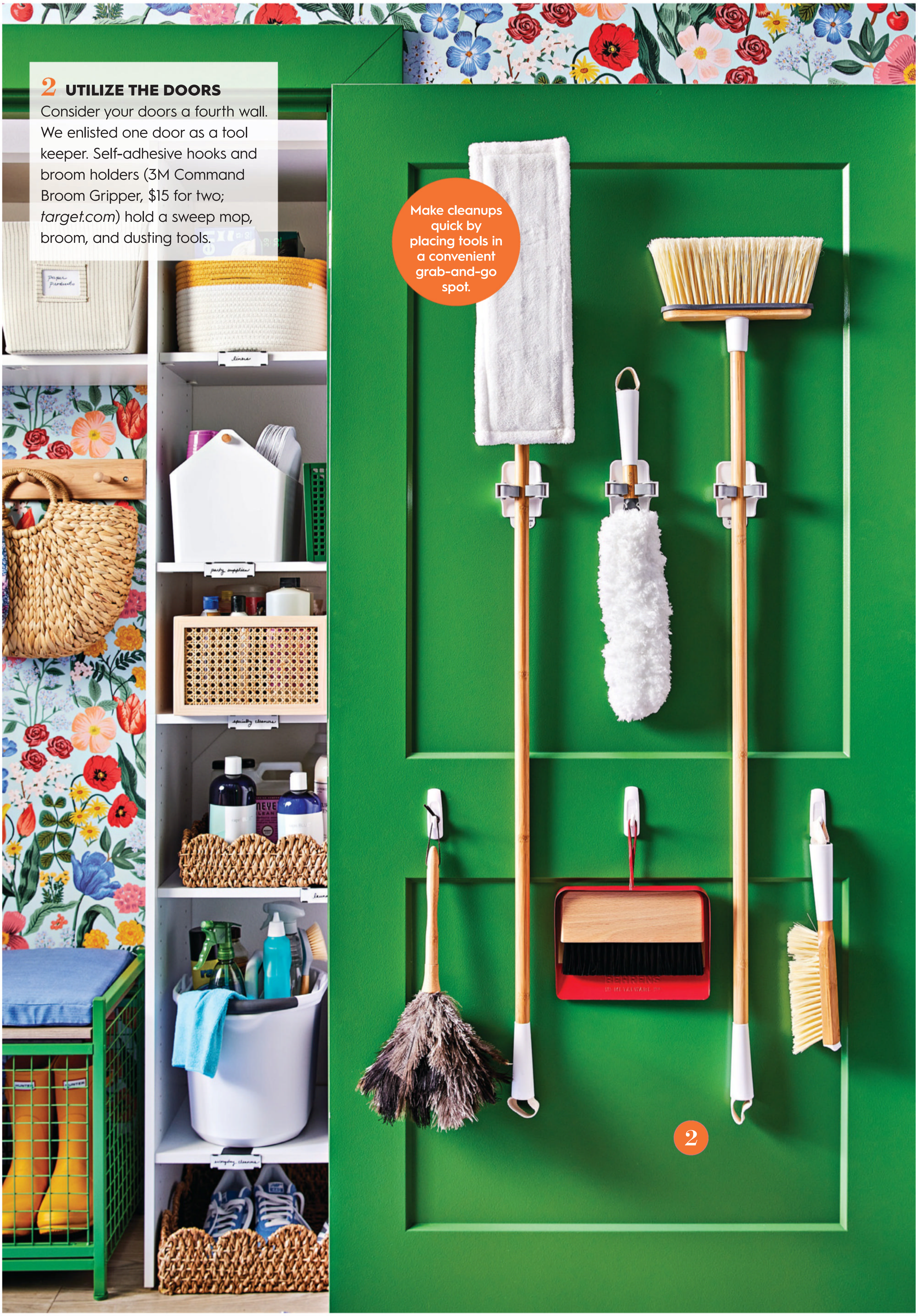
EVERY CLOSET IN YOUR HOME WORKS HARD. BUT THE ENTRY CLOSET? THAT ONE WORKS OVERTIME. Coats. Shoes. Pet stuff. The vacuum. All the other cleaning tools and supplies. If someone in your family asks, "Hey, where can I find...?" you yell back, "The front closet!" Where exactly? Good luck, kid! (We're not wrong, right?)

To solve that do-it-all, find-everything-here need, we outfitted a standard double-door entryway closet with shelves purchased at a home improvement store, then slid in a bench as a spot to put on shoes, added baskets and bins for supplies, and installed ample hooks for coats, bags, and cleaning tools. Labels ensure everything has a home (and gets returned to the right spot); bright floral wallpaper and a splash of green paint deliver a dose of cheer to an otherwise utilitarian space. When a space is well-designed, it's more likely to be maintained by those who use it.

Now when you send someone to the front closet, they'll know exactly where to find whatever they're on the hunt for—whether it's a soccer ball, raincoat, or that very specific pet mess cleaner in which you'll say, "It's in the labeled wicker basket, fourth shelf on the right!"

1 EQUIP YOUR SPACE

After paint and wallpaper, we filled our open space with a prefab closet system. Two towers and an overhead unit with adjustable shelves give us room to stack everyday and bulk items. We placed a bench in the center (Heavy-Duty Storage Bench, $120; *containerstore.com*) and installed hooks above to hang coats and bags. (Off-season items go in storage.)



2 UTILIZE THE DOORS

Consider your doors a fourth wall. We enlisted one door as a tool keeper. Self-adhesive hooks and broom holders (3M Command Broom Gripper, $15 for two; *target.com*) hold a sweep mop, broom, and dusting tools.

Make cleanups quick by placing tools in a convenient grab-and-go spot.

3 SHOP YOUR HOUSE

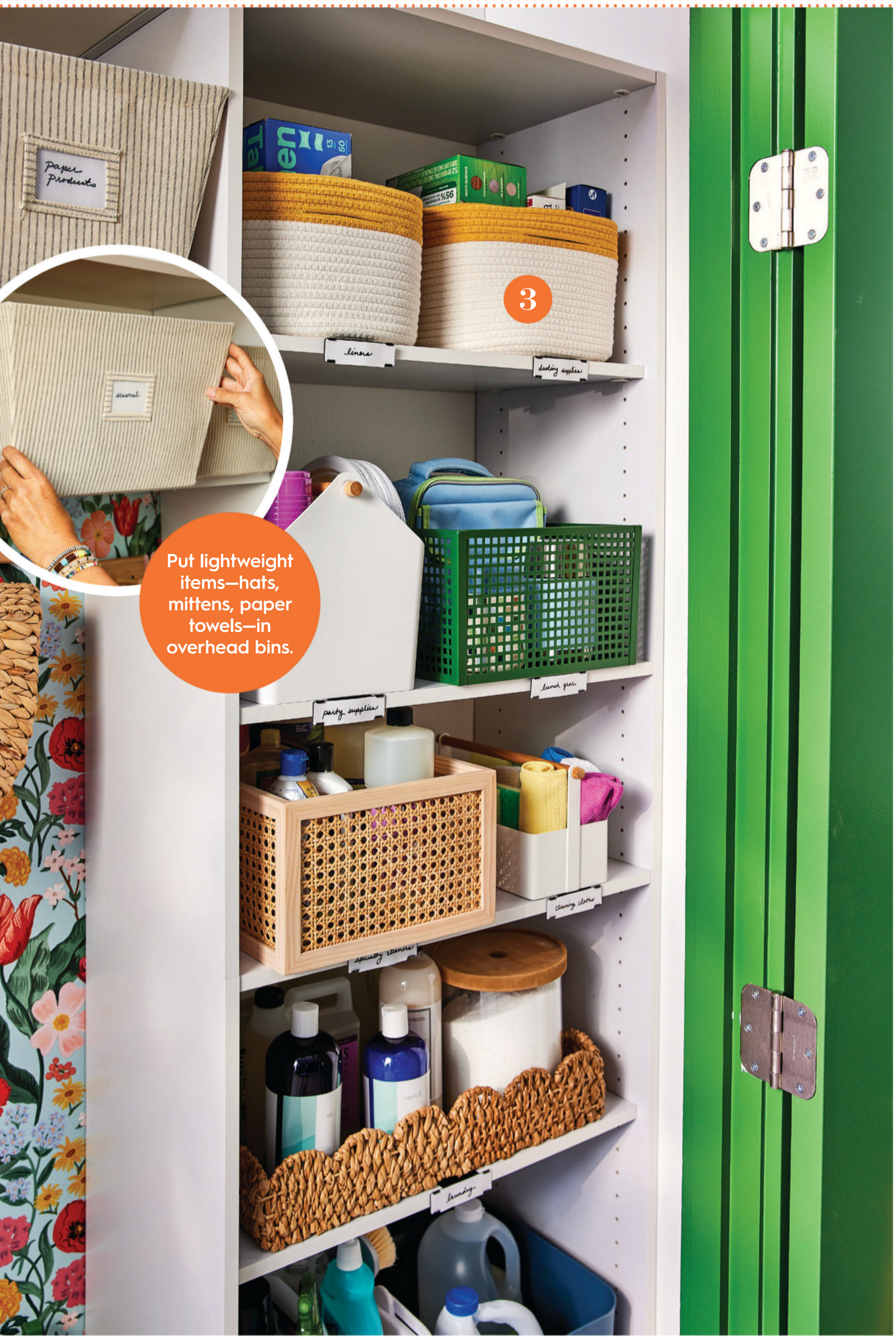
No need to buy all new containers. Employ baskets or bins you already own. Cloth or woven baskets can hide utilitarian supplies; metal or plastic buckets are easy to wipe if cleaning products drip.

4 ASSEMBLE A PARTY PACK

Place supplies like paper plates, plastic cups, and napkins in a singular caddy to quickly pull from a shelf to your table when a celebration presents itself.

5 ADD SOME FLAIR

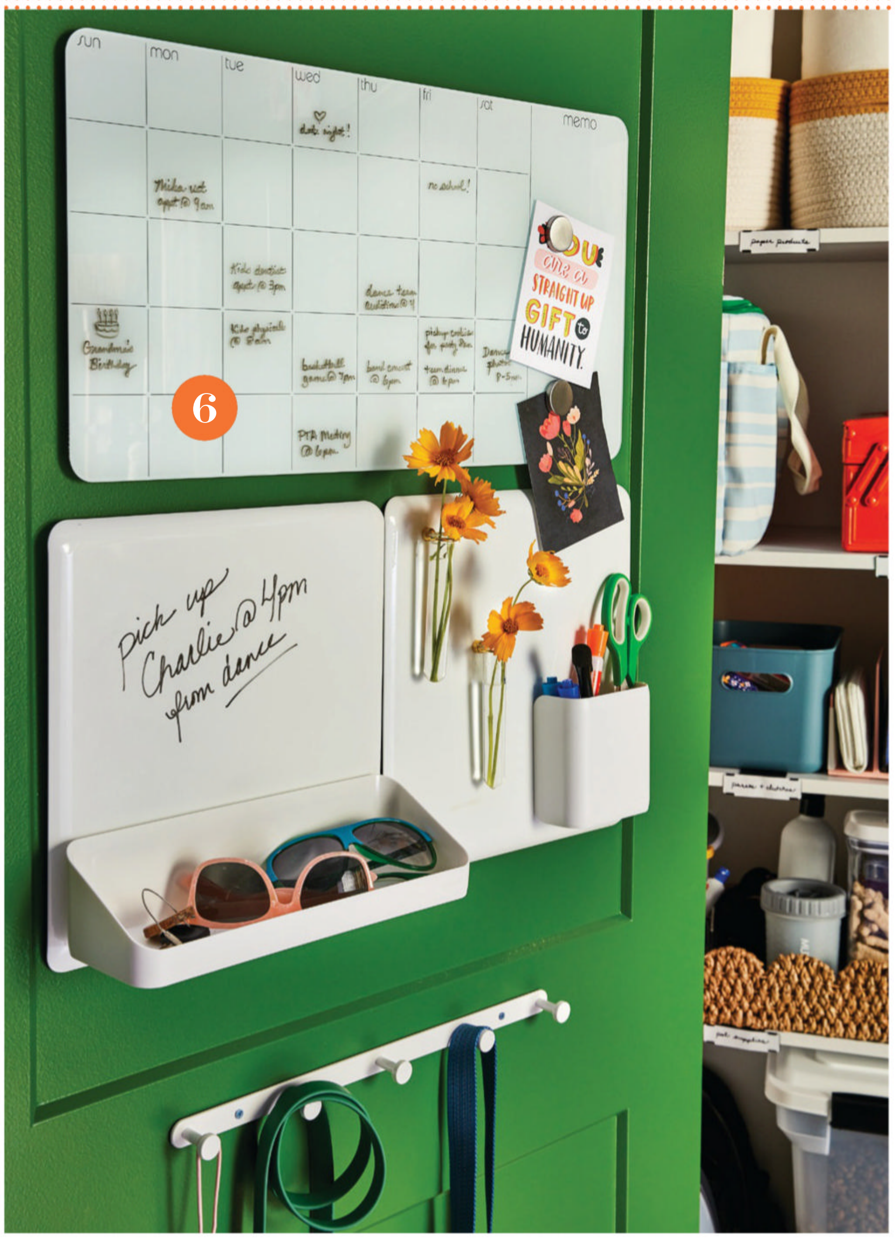
Keep your most-used items within reach. This clear caddy stocked with cleaning necessities goes where you need it, then tucks into a rattan shell for a bit of design relief when in the closet.


Paper Products
seasonal
3
linens
dusting supplies
lunch gear
party supplies
cleaning cloths
laundry

Put lightweight items—hats, mittens, paper towels—in overhead bins.

Protect a cute basket from spills by placing products in a plastic caddy.

Collect shoes in a tray, which you can easily shake out to remove debris.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pick up Charlie @ 4pm from dance
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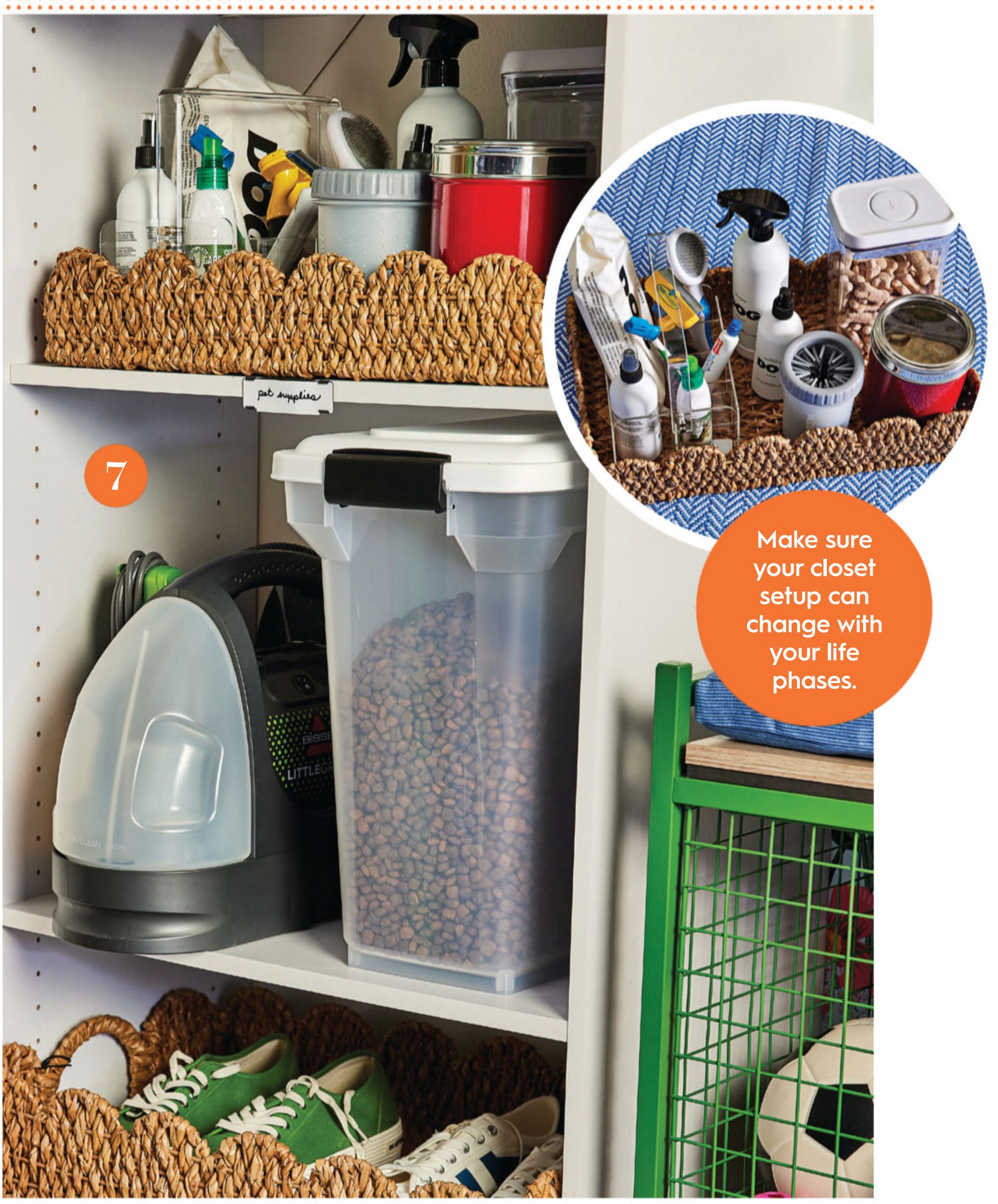

7
pet supplies

Make sure your closet setup can change with your life phases.

8
tools
TOYO
MADE IN JAPAN

6 MAKE A "GET OUT THE DOOR" ZONE

Utilize the back of another door as a grab-and-go station, complete with a dry-erase calendar to review the month ahead, a magnetic board for notes, small bins for sunglasses, and hooks for dog leashes.

7 GO LOW

Situate heavier items, such as a wet vacuum or tub of dog kibble, on lower shelves for ease in lifting. Never place anything that's bulky or hefty above the height of your shoulders.

8 ADD LABELS

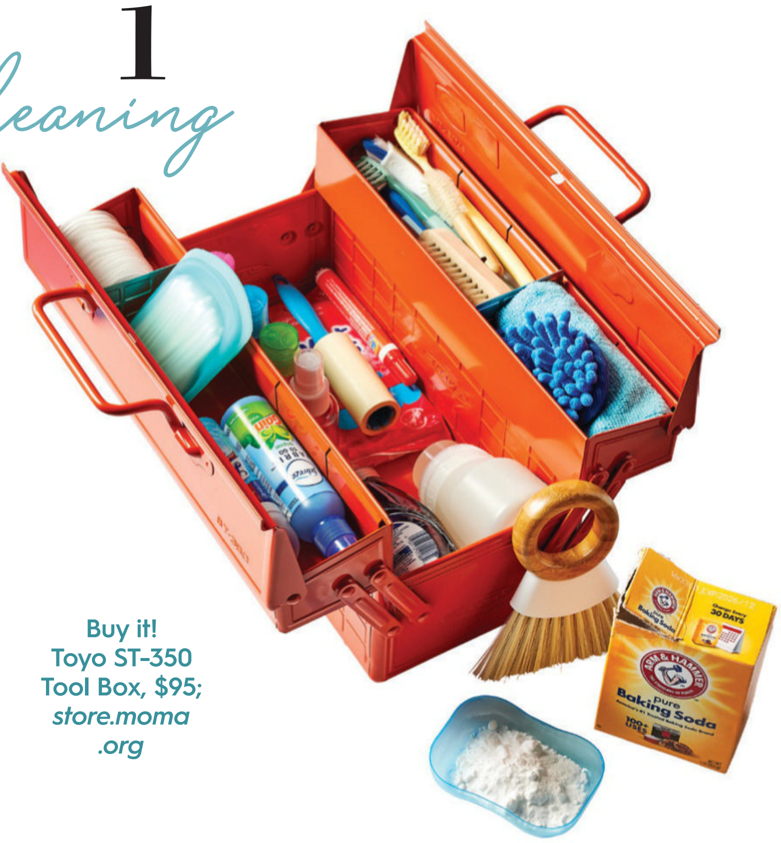
Keep hunting to a minimum by placing a label on each shelf or under every basket. We skipped noting obvious things like dog food but added labels like "tools," "laundry," and "everyday cleaners." If something is removed, everyone will know where it goes again.

ONE TOOLBOX

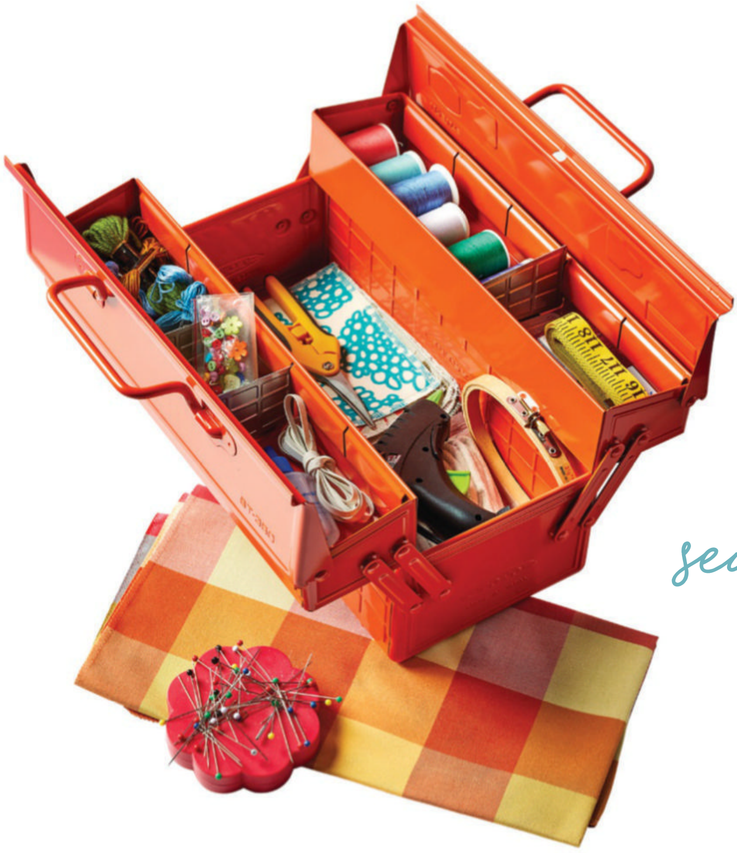
FOUR WAYS

We like a grab-and-go toolbox for quick fixes, but think beyond a hammer and wrench to build a kit for...

1 *cleaning*

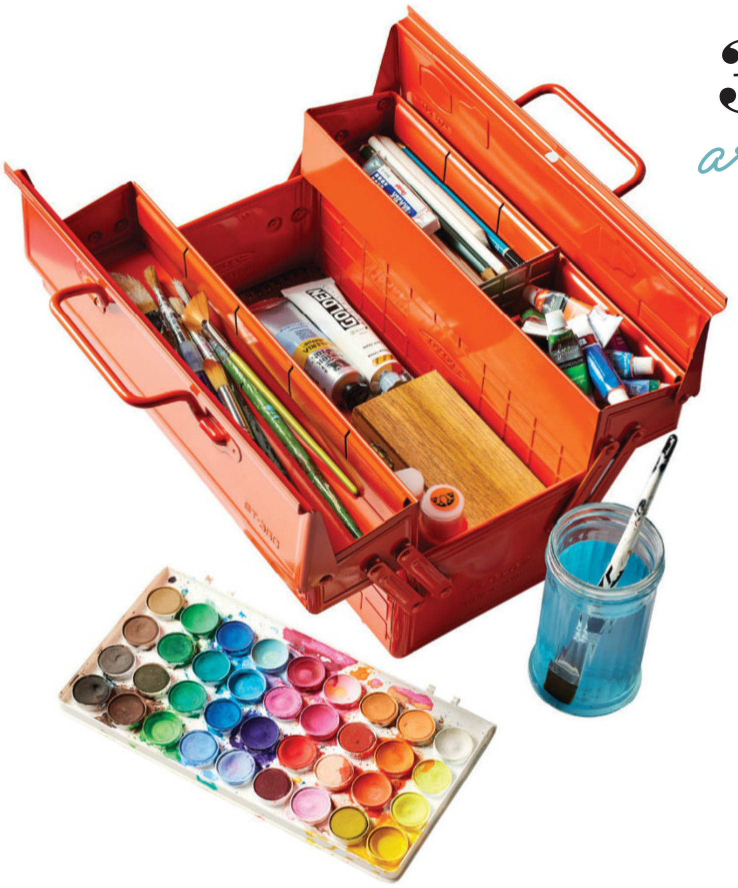


Buy it! Toyo ST-350 Tool Box, $95; *store.moma.org*

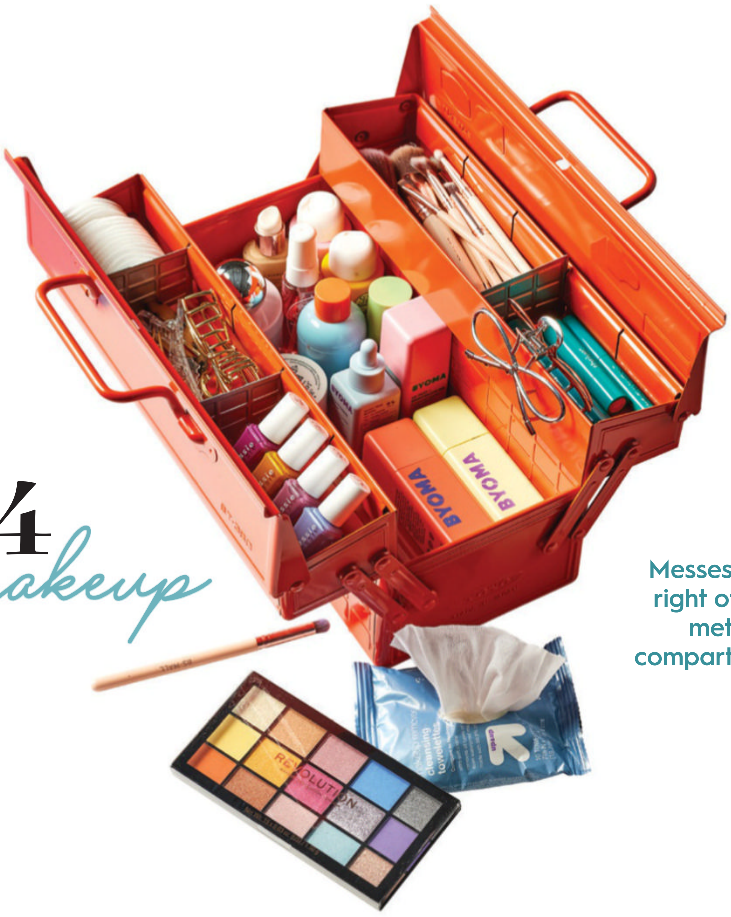


2 *sewing*

3 *art*



4 *makeup*



Messes wipe right off the metal compartments.

1 **CLEANING** Consider this your solution for small messes. Decant cotton swabs into a silicone pouch and baking soda into a travel soap dish. Then outfit with a rag, toothbrushes, and mini bottles of cleaners and stain removers. 2 **SEWING** Swap the metal dividers to fit thread and other mending necessities. 3 **ART** Separate brushes and paint tubes in the top compartments; notepads and larger supplies fit snugly in the bottom. 4 **MAKEUP** A modern take on the trusty Caboodle, this bin stashes polishes, serums, and cleansing items neatly in each compartment.

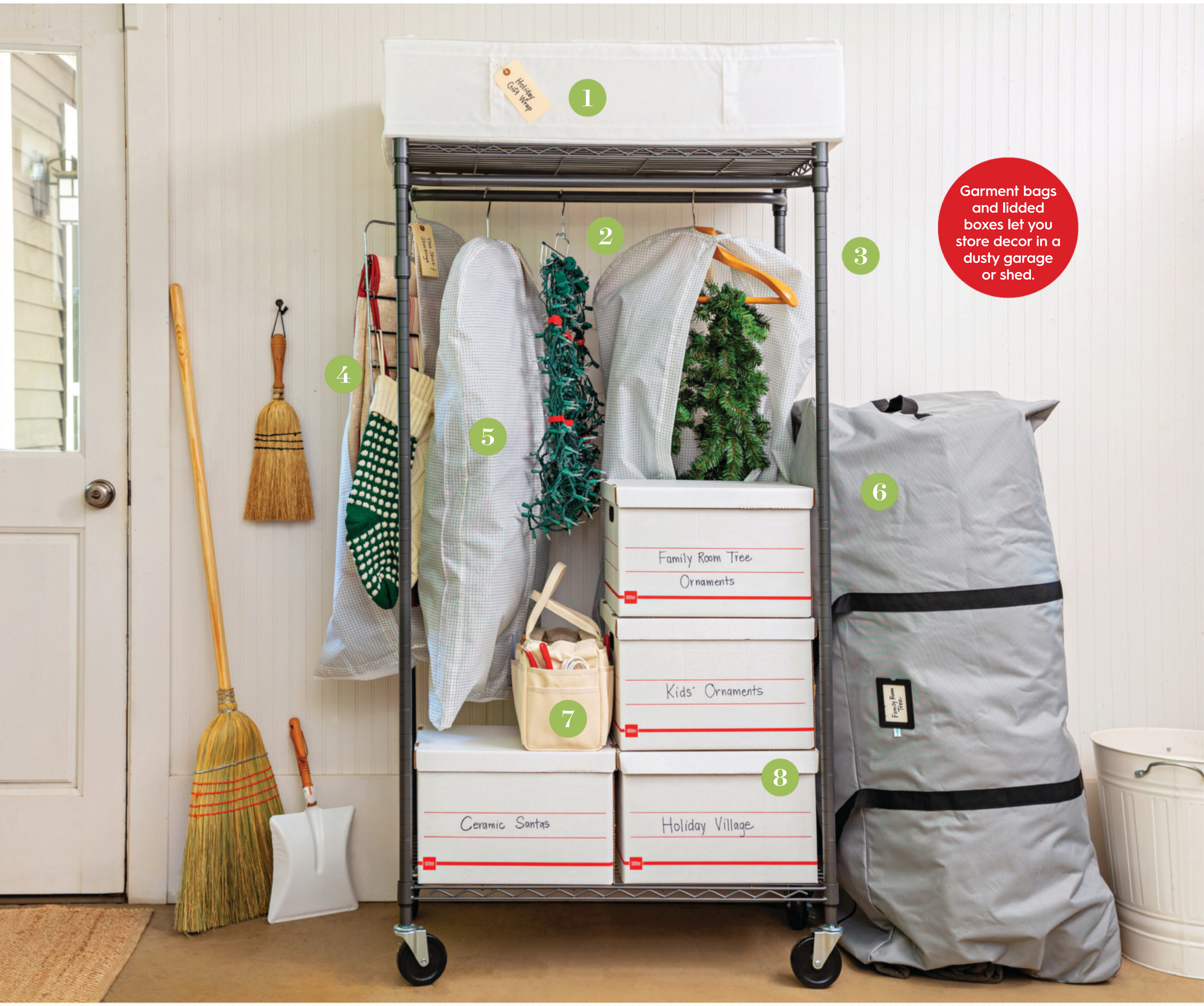
Get pro tips for taking down decorations and packing up your faux tree for next year: *BHG.com/ TreeStorage*

STORE WITH *care*

Un-decorating for any holiday will be a cinch when you follow our tips for stashing your stuff.

WRITER **AMY PANOS** PHOTOGRAPHER **JOHN GRANEN**
PRODUCER **JANNA LUFKIN**

THE GIFTS ARE OPENED, THE COOKIES ARE EATEN, AND THE EGGNOG IS LONG GONE. All those tchotchkes that filled you with glee last fall are now just a reminder of how much work it will take to put them away. We wouldn't blame you if you crammed everything into the nearest plastic bin and called it a day. But don't do that! Instead, take a beat and use this chance to get rid of anything you don't love or didn't use this season. Why store it one more year? Donate it—somebody might be thrilled with the find. Once you've edited down to the keepers, you can use versatile basics like bankers boxes and garment bags (rather than buying a bunch of holiday-specific organizers) to store your treasures. When you pull out your decor next year, you'll feel like a kid on Christmas morning.

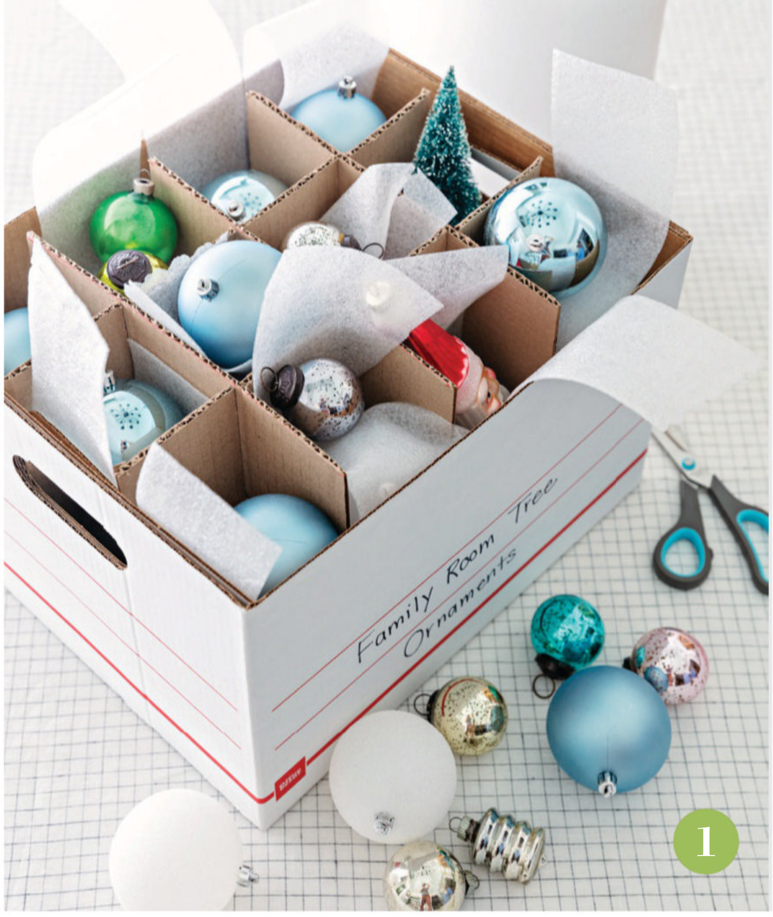


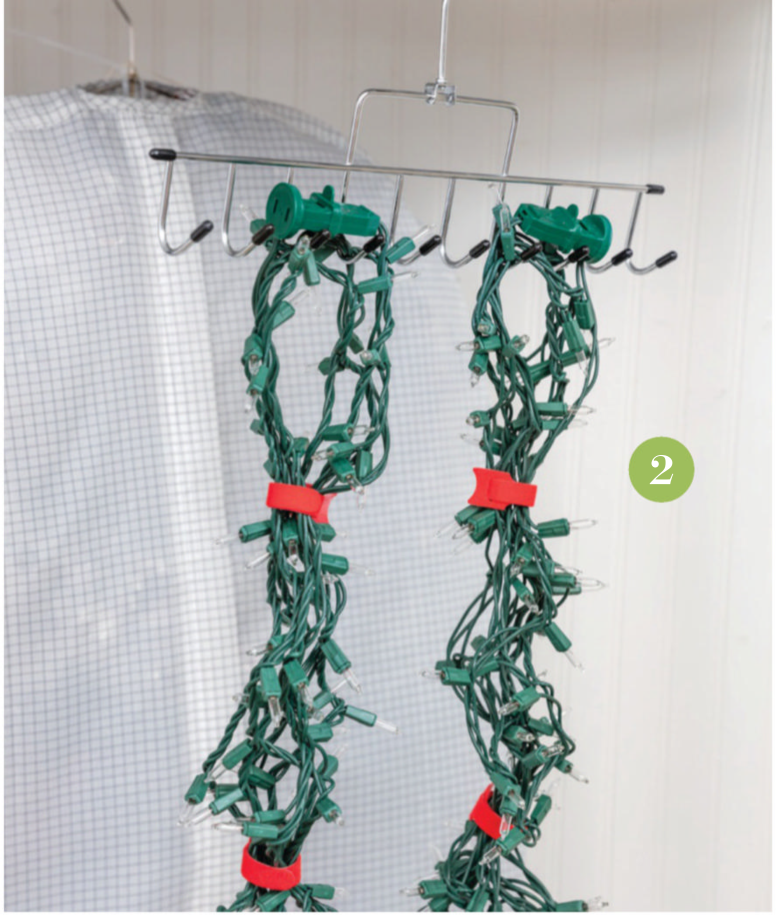
Garment bags and lidded boxes let you store decor in a dusty garage or shed.

HOLIDAY *WARDROBE*

PACK UP YOUR HOLIDAY DECOR USING INEXPENSIVE, VERSATILE STORAGE BASICS LIKE CARDBOARD BOXES, HANGERS, AND UNDER-THE-BED BINS.

1 **UNDERBED BIN** A 36-inch bin fits on the top shelf and is perfect for long rolls of wrapping paper. Skubb Storage Case, $10; *ikea.com/us* 2 **BELT/TIE HANGER** Tangled lights are a giant headache. To avoid, hang each strand on one of the hooks. Whitmor 10-Hook Accessory Hanger, $10; *amazon.com* 3 **CLOTHES RACK** A garment rack on wheels becomes a portable Christmas closet. Double Hanging Garment Rack, $78; *walmart.com/BHG* 4 **PANTS HANGER** Drape holiday textiles (tree skirts, tablecloths, and stockings) on a hanger with multiple bars. 4-Tier Swing-Arm Pant Hanger, $11; *containerstore.com* 5 **GARMENT BAGS** Dust-free, worry-free storage for garlands and fabrics. Brightroom Garment Bag, $10 for 2; *target.com* 6 **TREE BAG** The one holiday-specific container that's worth it: a tree bag on wheels. Primode Rolling Tree Storage Bag, $30; *amazon.com* 7 **TOOL BAG** Put all the tools you'll need for hanging wreaths and fixing lights into a handy tote with lots of pockets (this one has 23). Canvas Riggers Bag, $35; *duluthtrading.com* 8 **BANKERS BOXES** Roomy, sturdy, lidded storage for ornaments and collectibles, with zero plastic. Standard-Duty Corrugated Storage Boxes, $24 for 10; *officedepot.com*





5
Mantel
Garland

BOX BREAKDOWN

Lift the lids to see how we pack the parts and pieces.

1 ORNAMENTS

Cut cardboard grid inserts from wine cases to the right height for a bankers box. (Check with a grocery store for empty cases.) To cushion the ornaments, layer a thin strip of dish-packing foam (available at home improvement stores) between the bulbs as you load them into the separate cubbies.

2 LIGHT STRANDS

To prevent tangles, wind light strands into long ovals, then cinch with cable ties and hang. Reusable Hook-and-Loop Cable Ties, $10 for 100; *amazon.com*

3 GIFT WRAP

Tuck smaller containers among rolls of wrapping paper in an underbed bin to keep ribbon, scissors, and bows from getting tangled.

4 DECOR TOOLS

Stock your tool kit with batteries, suction hooks, florists wire, and clippers. You'll also want a light tester and replacement bulbs. LightKeeper Pro Incandescent Light Repair, $27; *acehardware.com*

5 GARLANDS

Loop faux garlands over wooden pants hangers (plastic ones aren't sturdy enough).

6 FAIRY LIGHTS

Save paper towel rolls and wind fairy lights around them. Tuck the plug into the tube.

GOAL

PREP FOR DROP-IN GUESTS

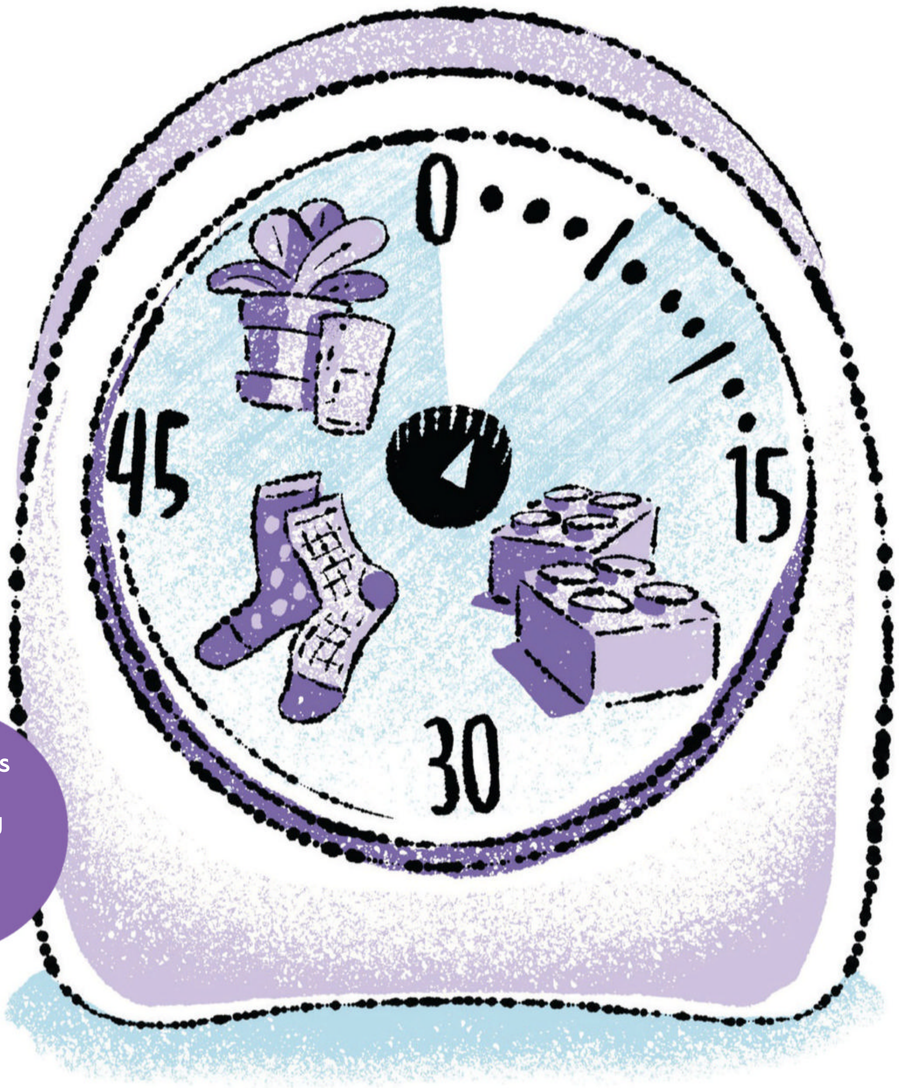
The living room is usually the first area in your home guests see. Staying on top of clutter, visible dust, and smudges will keep this high-traffic/high-visibility space ready for prime time.

WRITER **JOLIE KERR** ILLUSTRATOR **EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM**

OUR PICK

ADD ONE TOOL

The **Green Vivid Lambswool Duster** ($10; *amazon.com*) is a tried-and-true classic for dusting shelves full of books and knickknacks with just a few flicks of the wrist. Corner cobwebs and TV-screen lint, be gone!



Clutter has a way of stymieing cleaning before it starts.

EVERY DAY

Take five, literally. Set a timer and go after obvious items like discarded socks, abandoned toys, and half-full glasses of water (give thirsty houseplants a drink). Then wipe crumbs and drink rings from the coffee table with a damp cloth.

EVERY WEEK

Run a lint brush, hand vac, or rubber household glove over fabric surfaces to vamoose pet hair and dirt. Take the feather duster, *above*, for a spin over settled dander. Eyeball windows and mirrors, and spot-clean smudges.

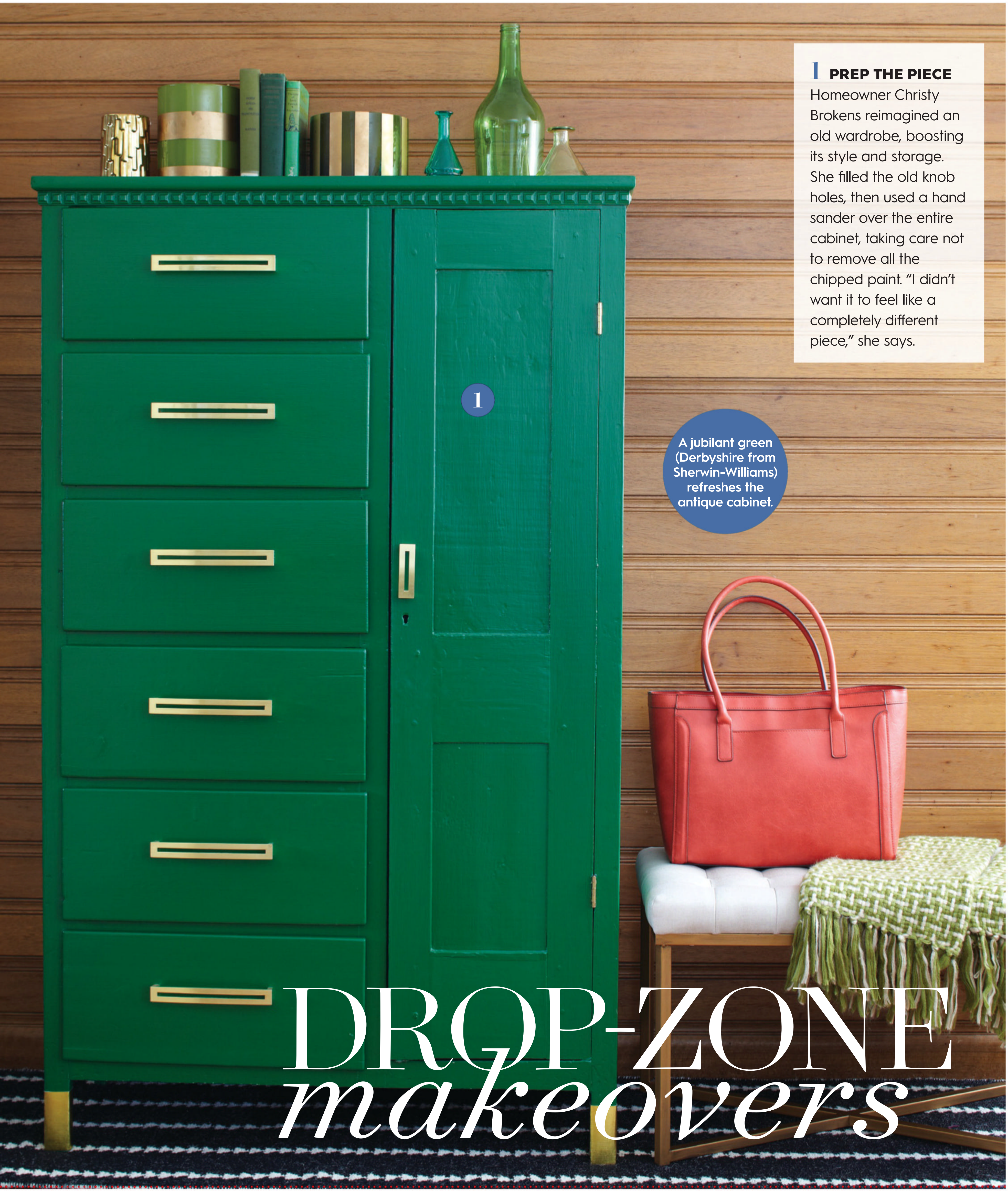
EVERY MONTH

Break out the specialty vacuum attachments. Use the upholstery brush to give curtains and couches a deeper clean, and get the between-the-cushions crumbs with the crevice tool.

PHOTO: CARSON DOWNING

DROP-ZONE *makeovers*

Three homeowners share how they tamed front-door chaos by rethinking the space they already have.

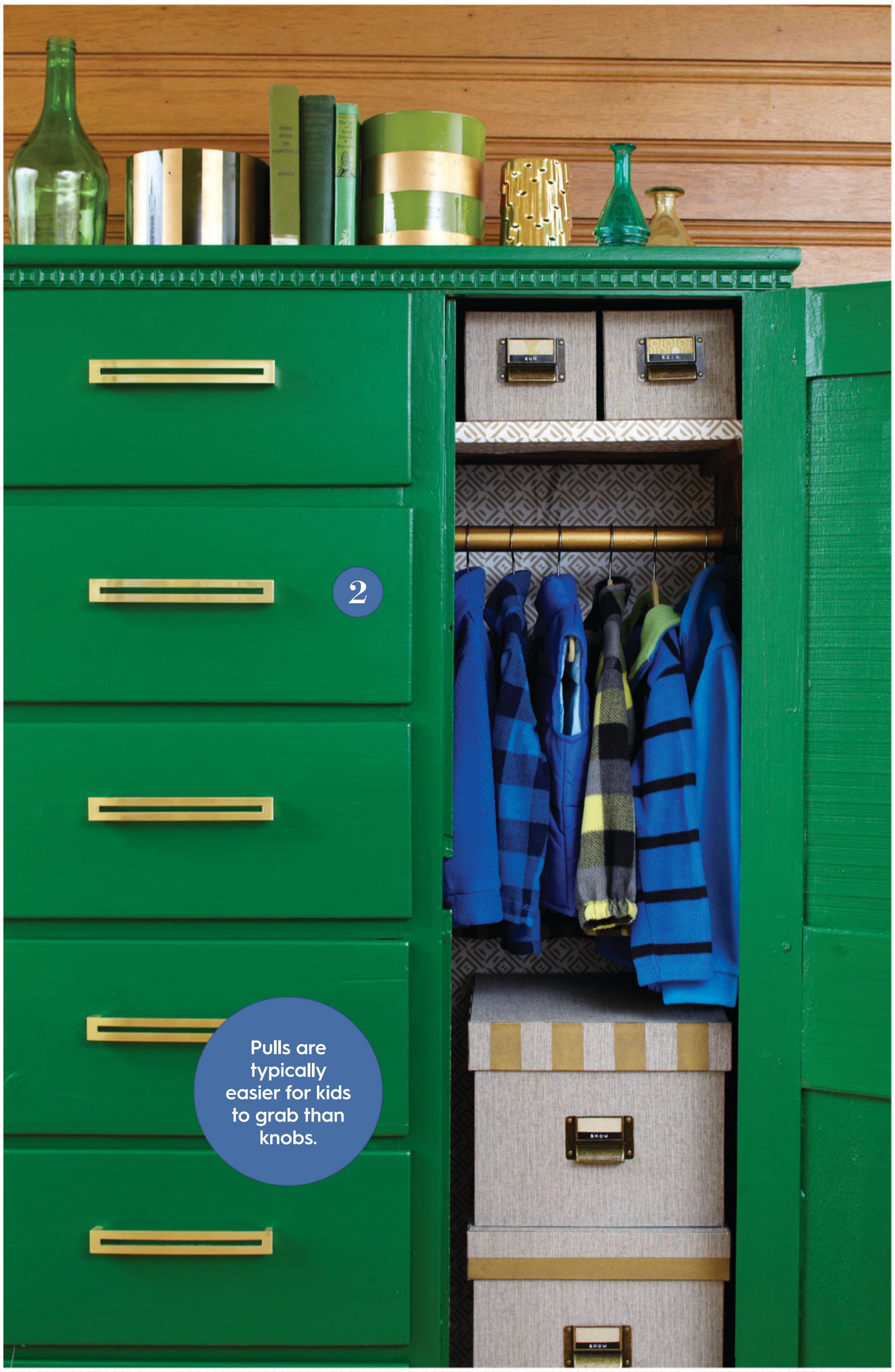


1 PREP THE PIECE

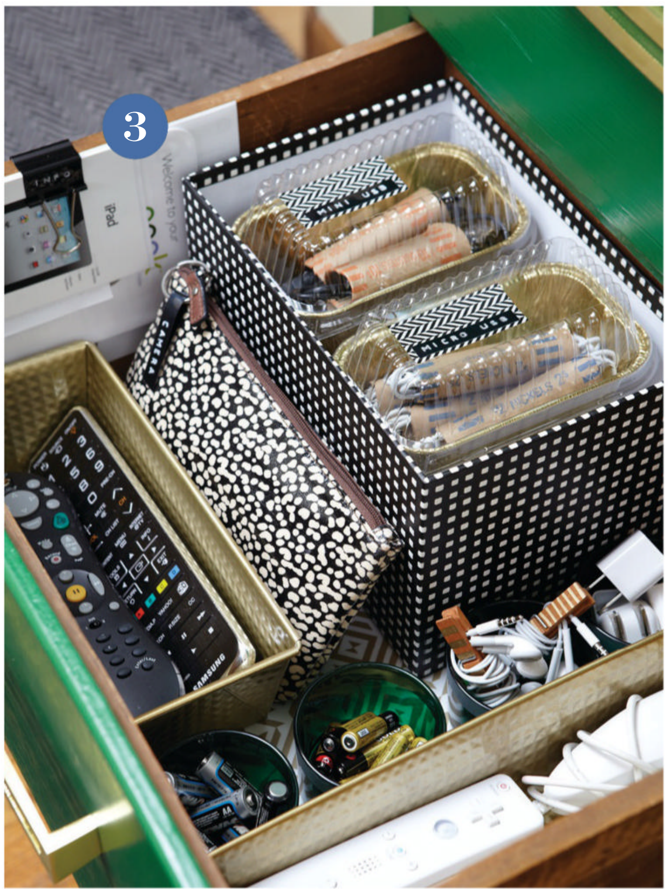
Homeowner Christy Brokens reimagined an old wardrobe, boosting its style and storage. She filled the old knob holes, then used a hand sander over the entire cabinet, taking care not to remove all the chipped paint. "I didn't want it to feel like a completely different piece," she says.

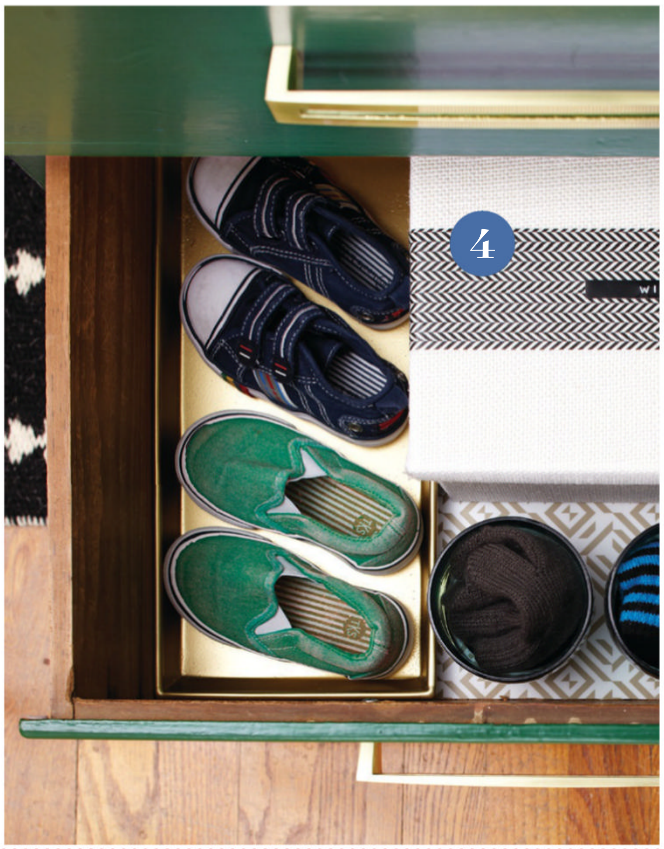
A jubilant green (Derbyshire from Sherwin-Williams) refreshes the antique cabinet.

WRITER: KIT SELZER; PHOTOGRAPHER: JAY WILDE



Pulls are typically easier for kids to grab than knobs.





makeover #1

FURNITURE FACELIFT

THE PROBLEM A 100-year-old cabinet had sentimental family value and storage potential, but it didn't fit homeowner Christy Brokens' style. Built by her husband's great-grandfather using wooden shipping crates as drawers, Christy knew the piece could fill a practical role in the entryway for her family of six. All it needed was a light update—one that made it feel clean and current but didn't strip away its history.

THE SOLUTION Christy's makeover started with a bold green paint to cover the old white finish. "I fell in love with the color and was itching to use it," she says. She then replaced the original glass knobs with metal pulls (Centinel; *atlashomewares.com*), added shelf paper, and stocked the drawers with storage bins.

2 MAKE IT POP

After priming the cabinet, Christy brushed on two coats of enamel paint. She replaced door hinges, mounted sockets for the closet rod (which she spray-painted metallic gold), and drilled holes for new hardware. A strip of dentil molding attached with finishing nails adds interest along the top edge.

3 ADD PATTERN

Laminated vinyl shelf paper lines the drawers and the hanging section. "It lightens up the dark wood inside," Christy says. She places small items—like batteries, charging cords, and remotes—in bins and cups so they don't get lost.

4 ASSIGN DRAWERS

Everyone in Christy's family gets a drawer to stow their shoes, gloves, sunglasses, and other get-out-the-door items. Decorative dollar-store boxes and trays separate and protect items in each drawer.

makeover #2

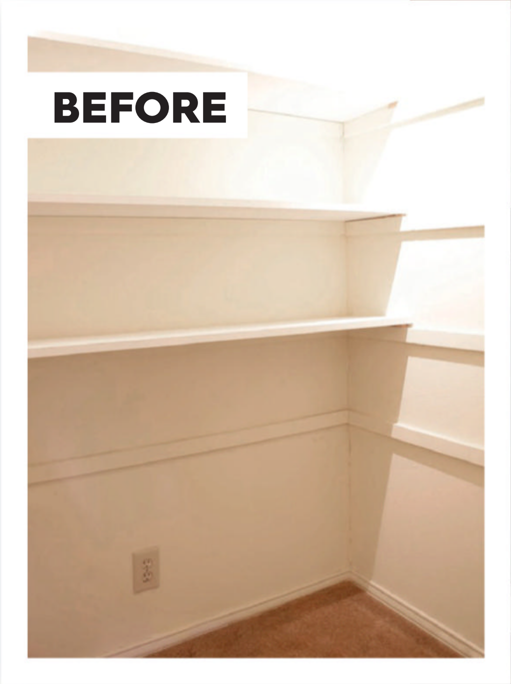
MAKESHIFT MUDROOM

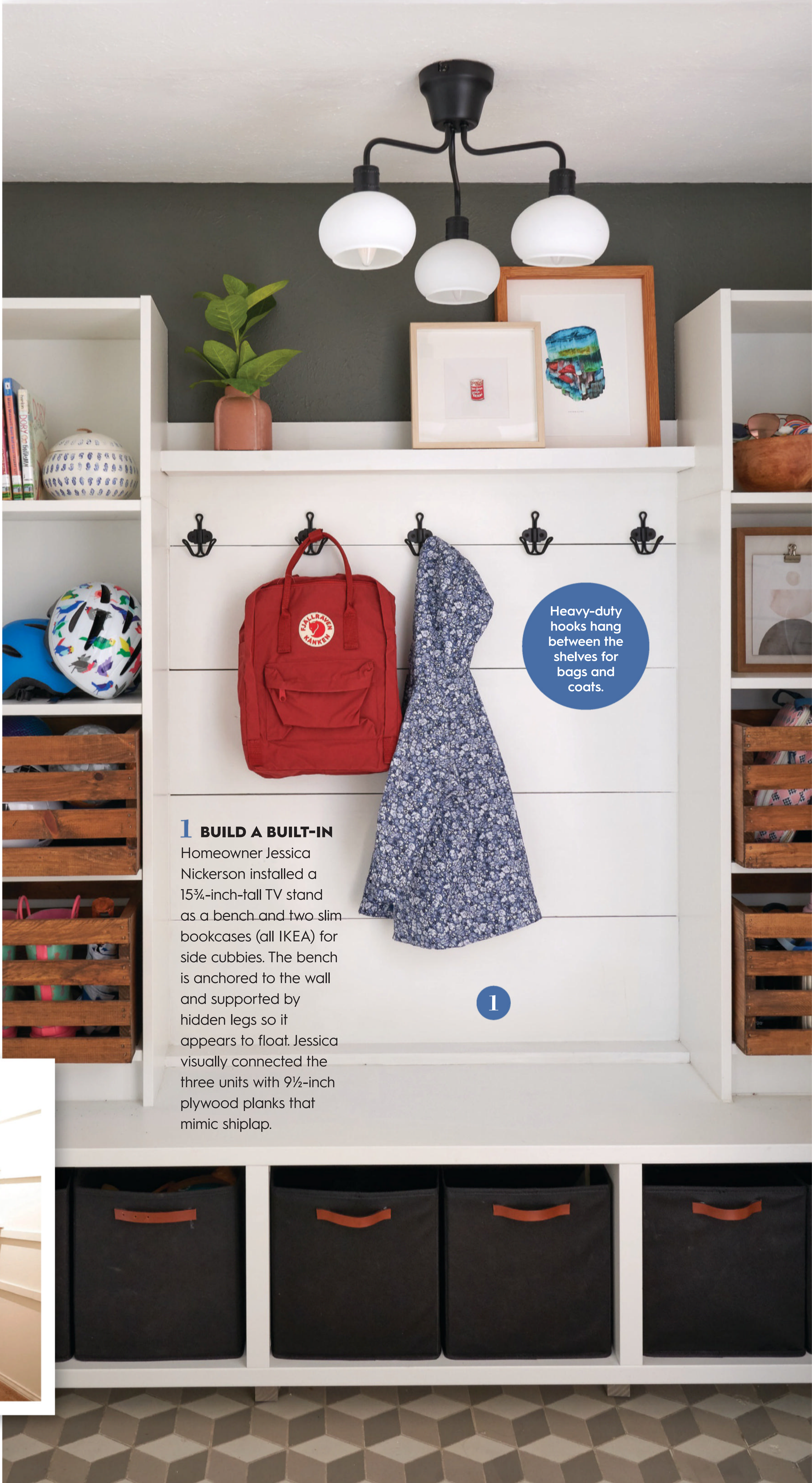
THE PROBLEM

A month after moving into her suburban Dallas home, Jessica Nickerson was done with daily stuff piling up. A 3-foot-deep closet near her garage was functional, but she saw more potential in the space.

THE SOLUTION

Removing the closet doors made it instantly feel more like a mudroom. "There's no rule that a closet has to stay a closet," says Jessica, an interior stylist who showcases her projects on her blog, *House Homemade*. She installed a bench, bookcases, and hooks to hold keys, bike helmets, and backpacks. "It's nice to have a space where there are clear-cut expectations about where things go. Staying organized feels so much more achievable now."


BEFORE


Heavy-duty hooks hang between the shelves for bags and coats.

1

1 BUILD A BUILT-IN
Homeowner Jessica Nickerson installed a 15¾-inch-tall TV stand as a bench and two slim bookcases (all IKEA) for side cubbies. The bench is anchored to the wall and supported by hidden legs so it appears to float. Jessica visually connected the three units with 9½-inch plywood planks that mimic shiplap.

2 REDO THE FLOOR

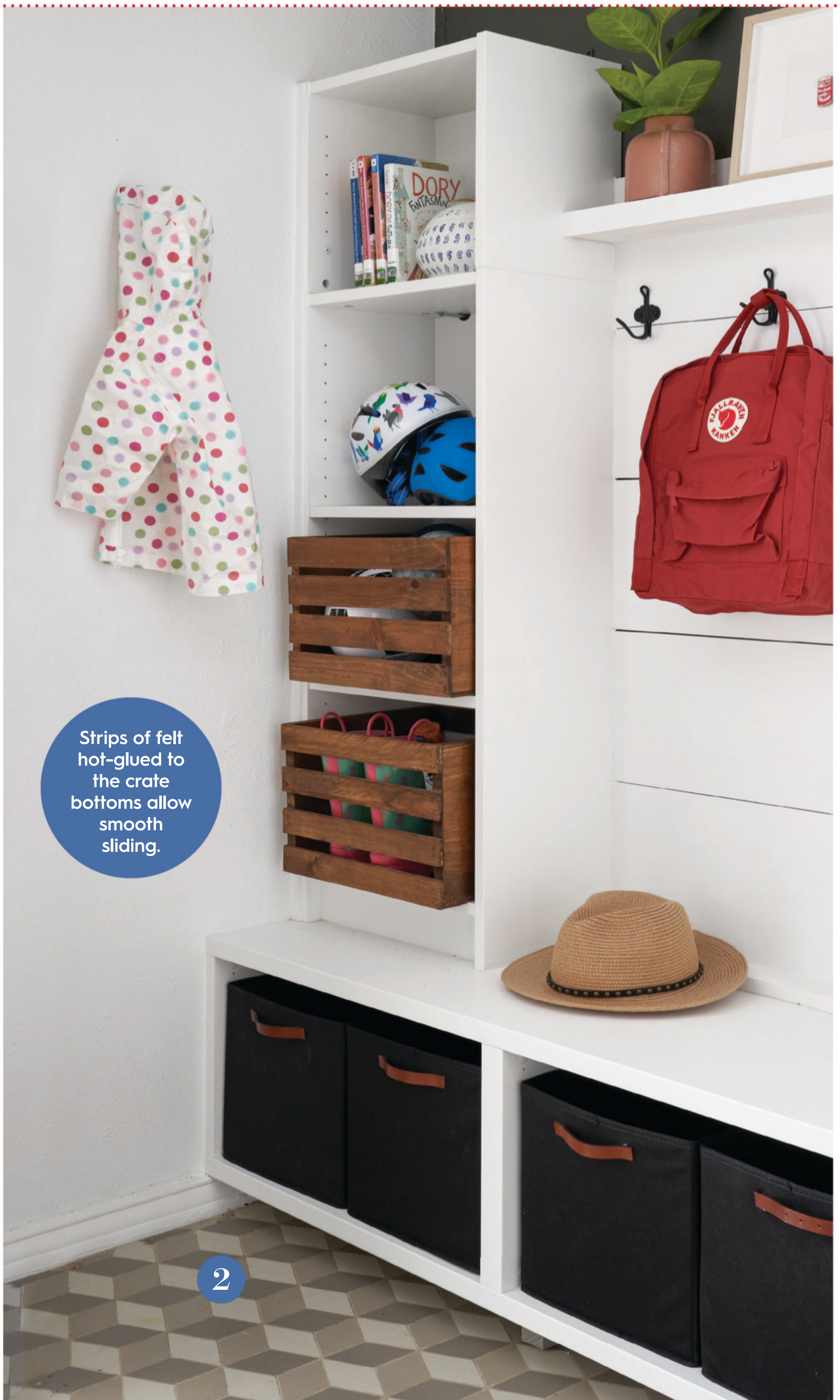
For a low-cost update, Jessica ripped up old carpet and stenciled the concrete. She used sample sizes of paint in three shades of gray and a geometric stencil. To seal the design, she rolled on polyurethane.

3 RETROFIT BINS

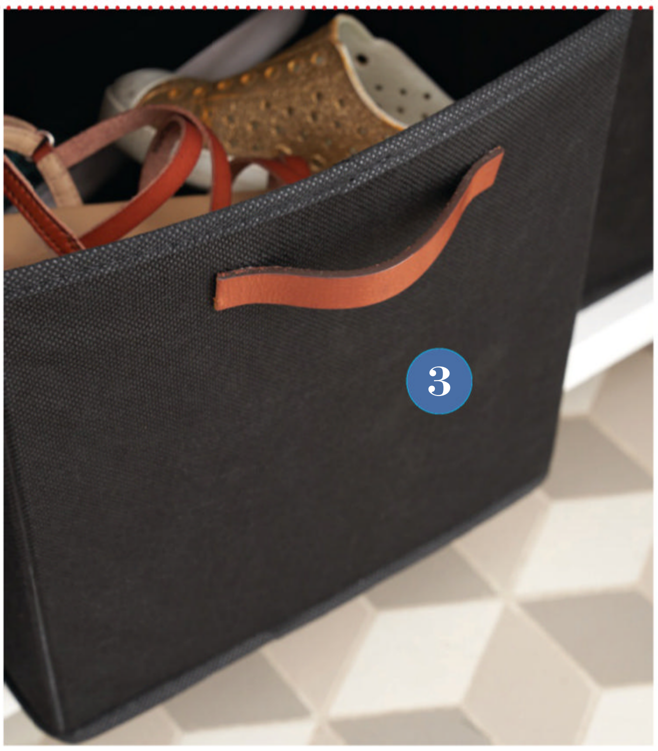
Instead of storing shoes directly on the shelves, Jessica hid them in fabric cubes. The fronts had grommets in shiny metal that didn't fit her scheme, so she fashioned new handles by cutting a thrifted leather belt into strips and hot-gluing them to the cubes.

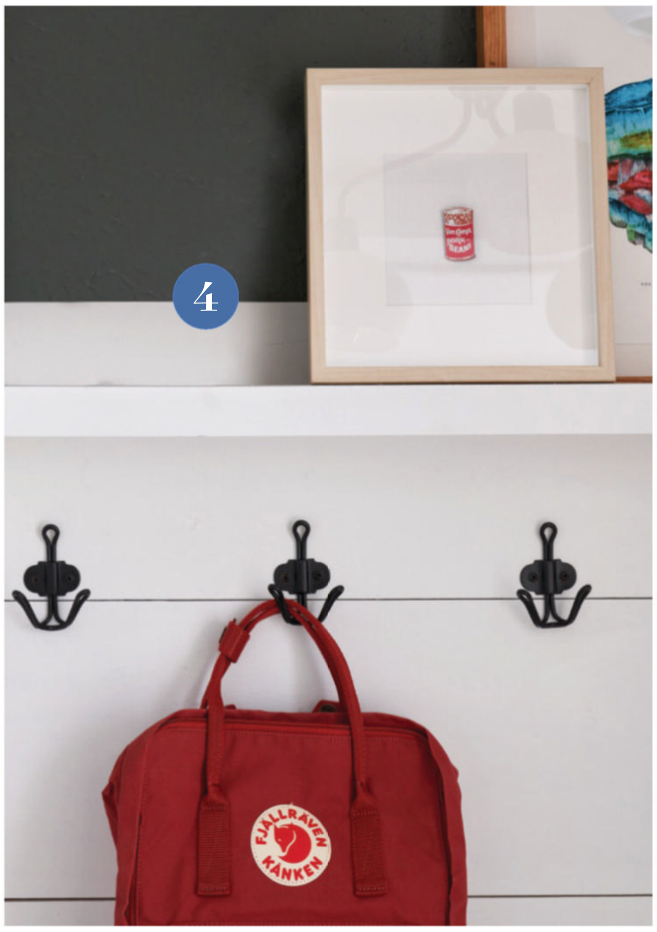
4 BRING IN DECOR

A picture ledge made from scrap plywood shows off decorative items. A 1x2 lip secures the artwork, including a left-behind magnet Jessica framed after finding it while demoing the closet. The dark gray upper wall sets off the white built-ins and balances the bins.

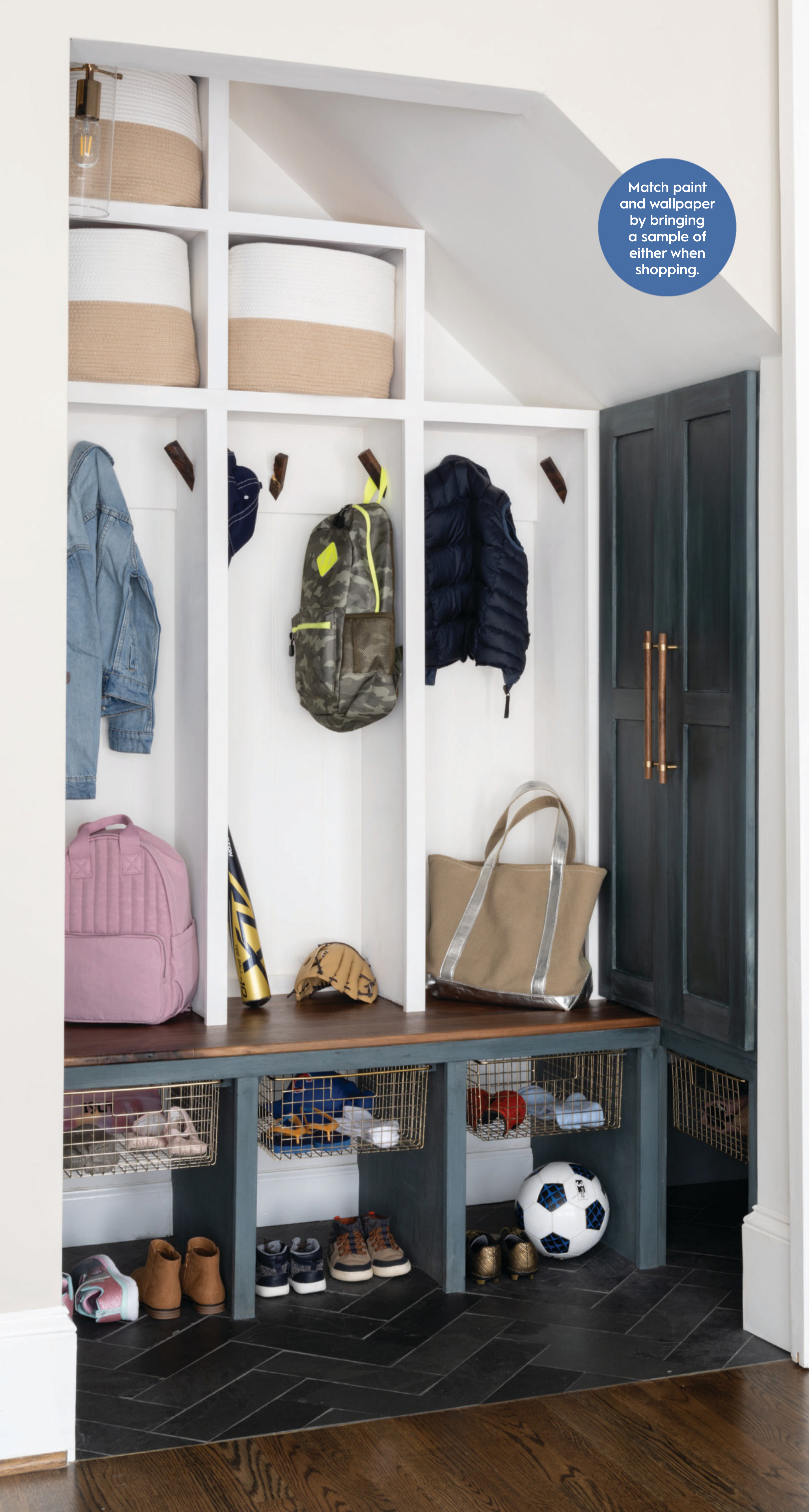


Strips of felt hot-glued to the crate bottoms allow smooth sliding.





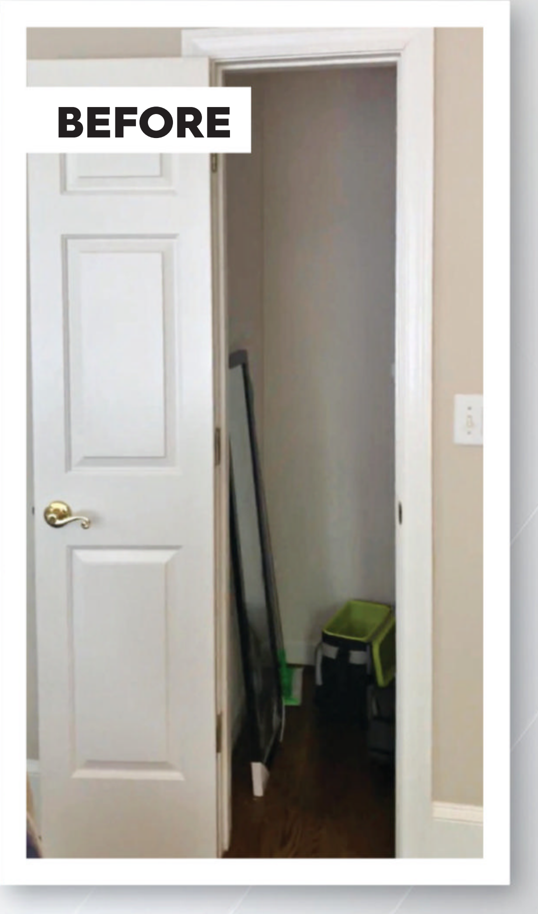
WRITER: JODY GARLOCK; PHOTOGRAPHER: NATHAN SCHRODER; STYLIST: JENNY O'CONNOR



Match paint and wallpaper by bringing a sample of either when shopping.

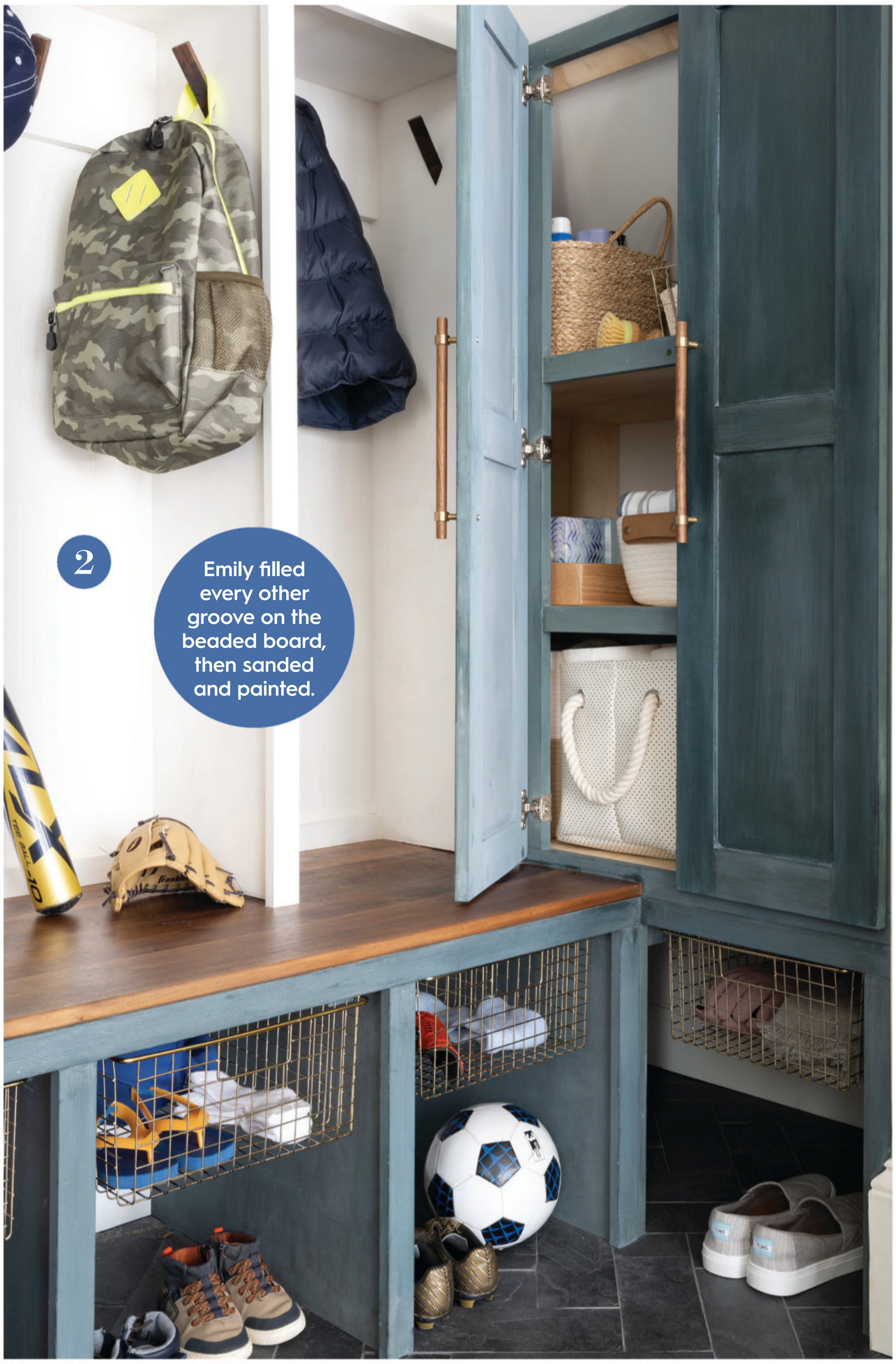
1 PLAN THE DESIGN

Homeowner Emily Alexander sketched out the 6x3-foot space to determine the measurements for the built-in units. Her design incorporates two benches placed in an L. The long bench contains shoe cubbies and a walnut top, which supports the lockers. Emily raised the lockers as tall as possible (46 inches), then maxed her storage by building cubbies to the ceiling. A shorter bench became the base for the cabinet that fills the wall where the ceiling slopes.

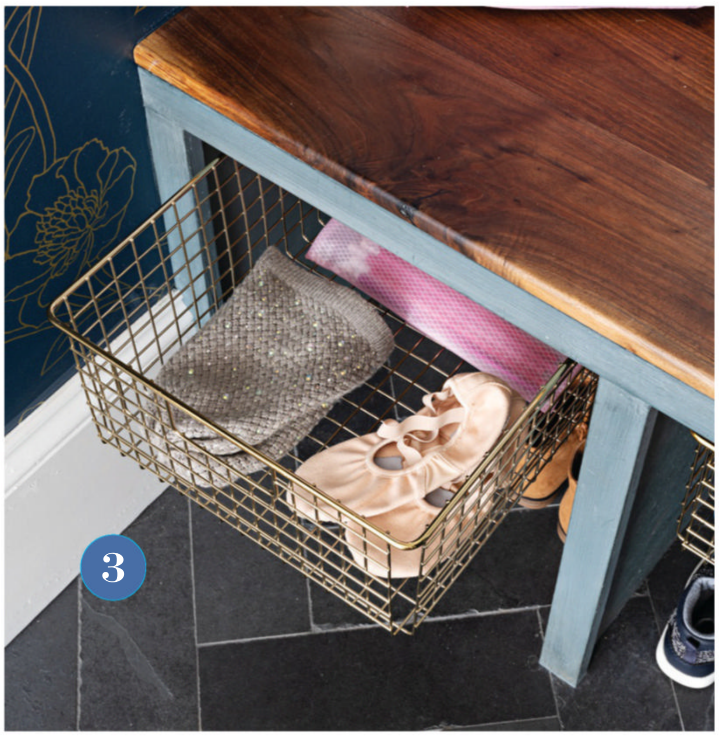


BEFORE

WRITER: JODY GARLOCK; PHOTOGRAPHER: ROBERT PETERSON; STYLIST: JENNIFER CONDON



Emily filled every other groove on the beaded board, then sanded and painted.



this week
Sunday
Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
ballet
t-ball practice
acrobatics
Swim meet
Soccer game
4

makeover #3

UNDER-THE-STAIRS STORAGE SOLUTION

THE PROBLEM Shoes always come off in Emily Alexander's suburban Atlanta home. But that rule caused a tripping hazard. To gain an out-of-the-way yet easy-access drop zone, she opened up a closet that had a mere 18-inch-wide door and awkward usable space due to the sloped ceiling.

THE SOLUTION As a former math teacher, Emily was up for dealing with the angles. She cut drywall on a diagonal before adding a structural header to the widened opening, then packed the 3-foot-deep space with cubbies, baskets, lockers, and a cabinet. "It's not added square footage; it's more-usable square footage," says Emily, who shares her renovation projects on Instagram (@emilymadehome). "I'm really proud of the way it lays out and functions."

2 ASSEMBLE

Emily built all the units from ¾-inch plywood and backed the lockers with beaded-board paneling. The benches and lockers are three separate units, which she dry-fit before securing to the walls. She built the cabinet box and shelves directly into the angled space.

3 PACK IN STORAGE

Pullout baskets under the benches add functional space. Emily attached wood strips inside each shoe cubby, then sat the lipped wire baskets on the strips.

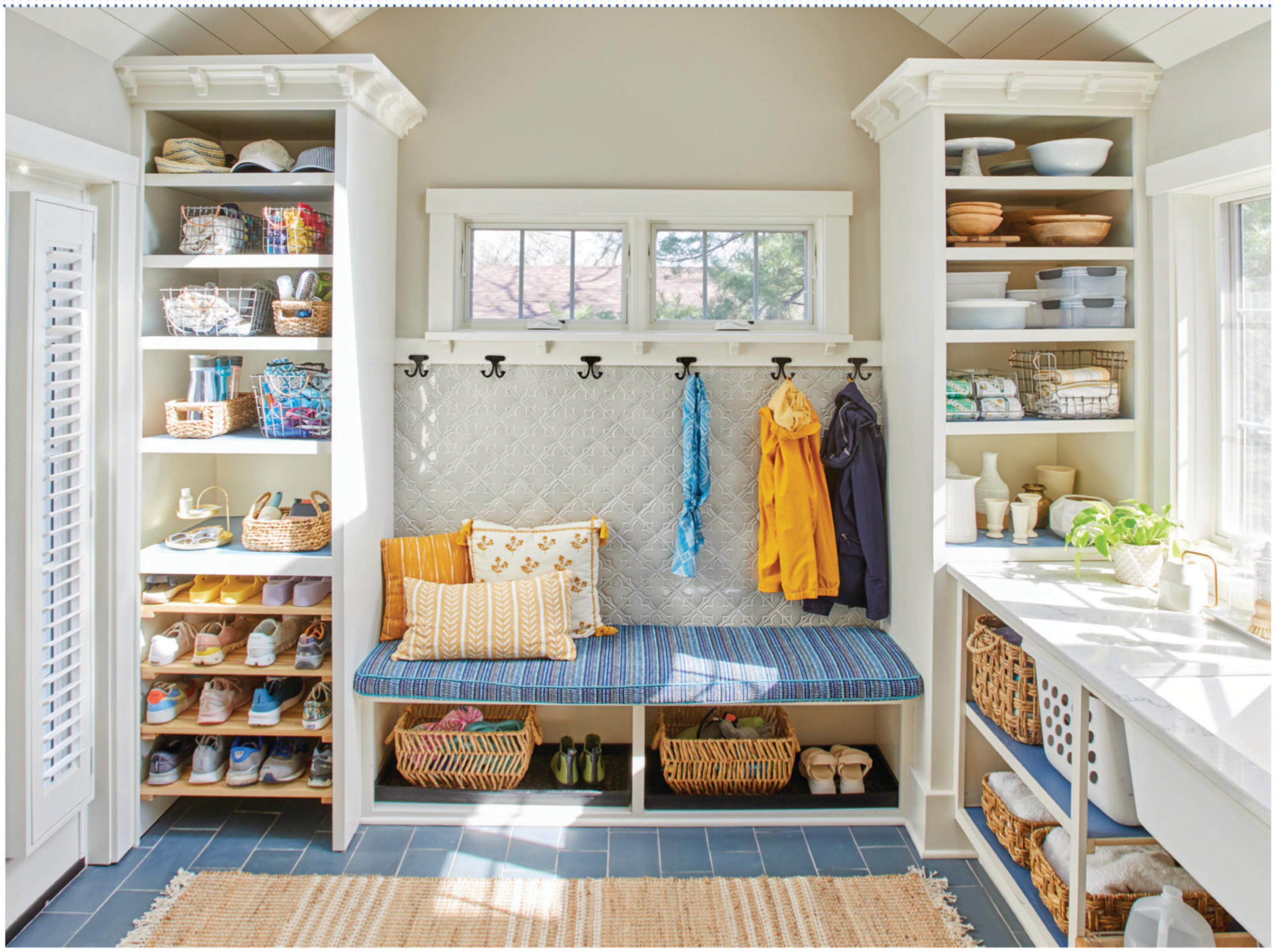
4 USE EVERY INCH

Emily turned the wall adjacent to the long bench into her family's organizational hub. Everything on it—the baskets (hung at kid height), an acrylic calendar, and a ledge to hold markers—is slim so nothing blocks access to the shoe cubbies or lockers.

THE DO-IT-ALL ROOM

Laundry. Utility sink. Cabinets galore. A multipurpose mudroom gives one family tons of spots to stash their gear—and space to grow.

WRITER **SAMANTHA S. THORPE** PHOTOGRAPHER **JASON DONNELLY** STYLIST **KATE MALO**



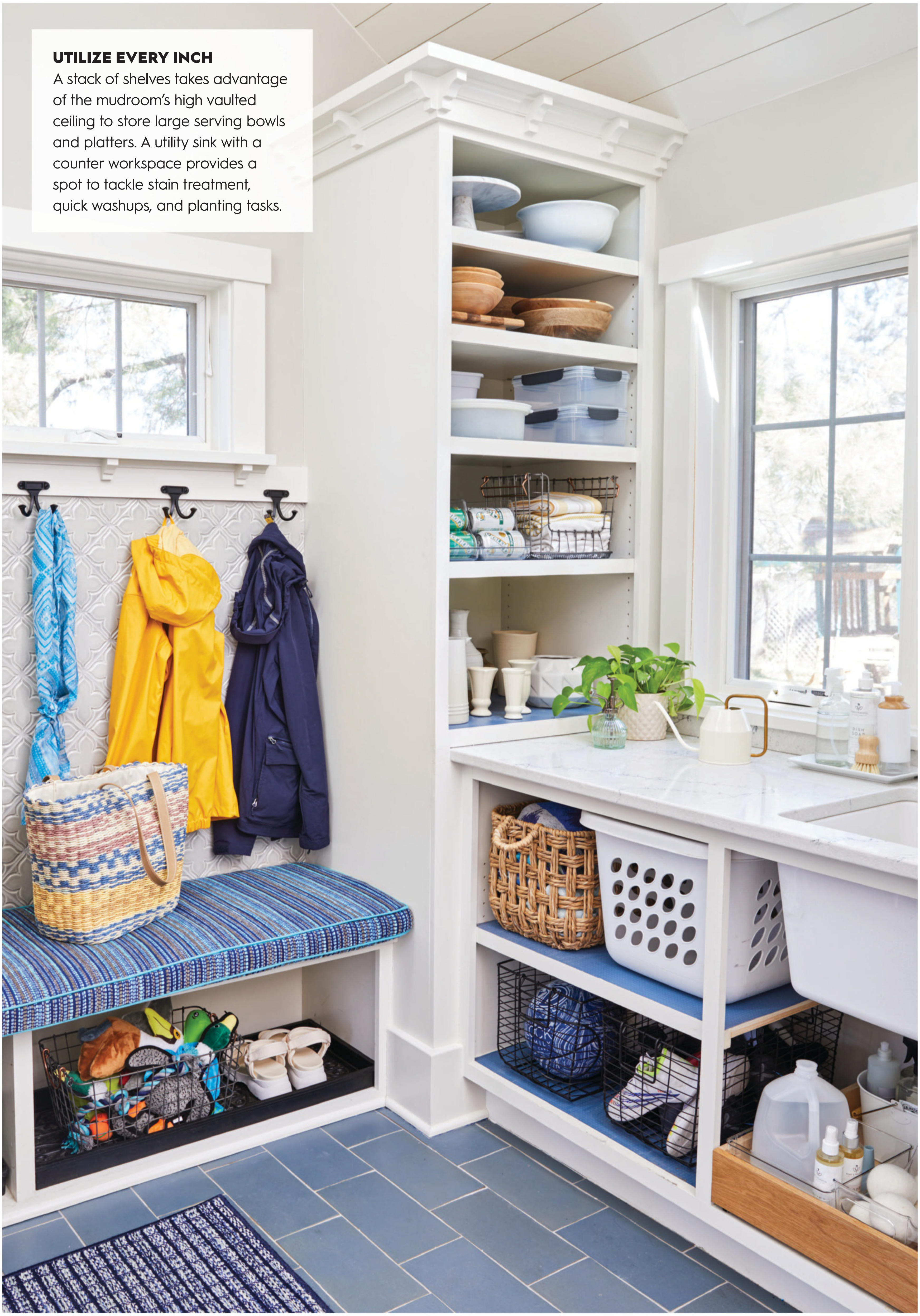
OUR 1918 HOME IN DES MOINES HAD IT ALL, EXCEPT A MAIN-FLOOR LAUNDRY, A UTILITY closet to stash more than coats, and a back door in the same neighborhood as the standalone garage. We desperately needed a mudroom for our growing family.

On our list: A place for shoes, a spot for dog Zippy's leash, a shelf for sports gear, a broom closet—and lots of natural light. We met with interior designer Cathy Kramer to add ample storage to an architect's plan for building a 10x15-foot all-purpose back room. Her smart assessment: "Your family owns lots of gear, coats, and shoes of varying sizes," Kramer says. "You need a place for things right inside the door and a plan for growth. If you fill every inch now, you won't have room for the kids' things as they get older."

As part of our long-term planning, Kramer recommended a combination of drawers, cabinets, and shelves to fit our belongings, plus a utility sink with a counter to clean up messes as soon as they happen.

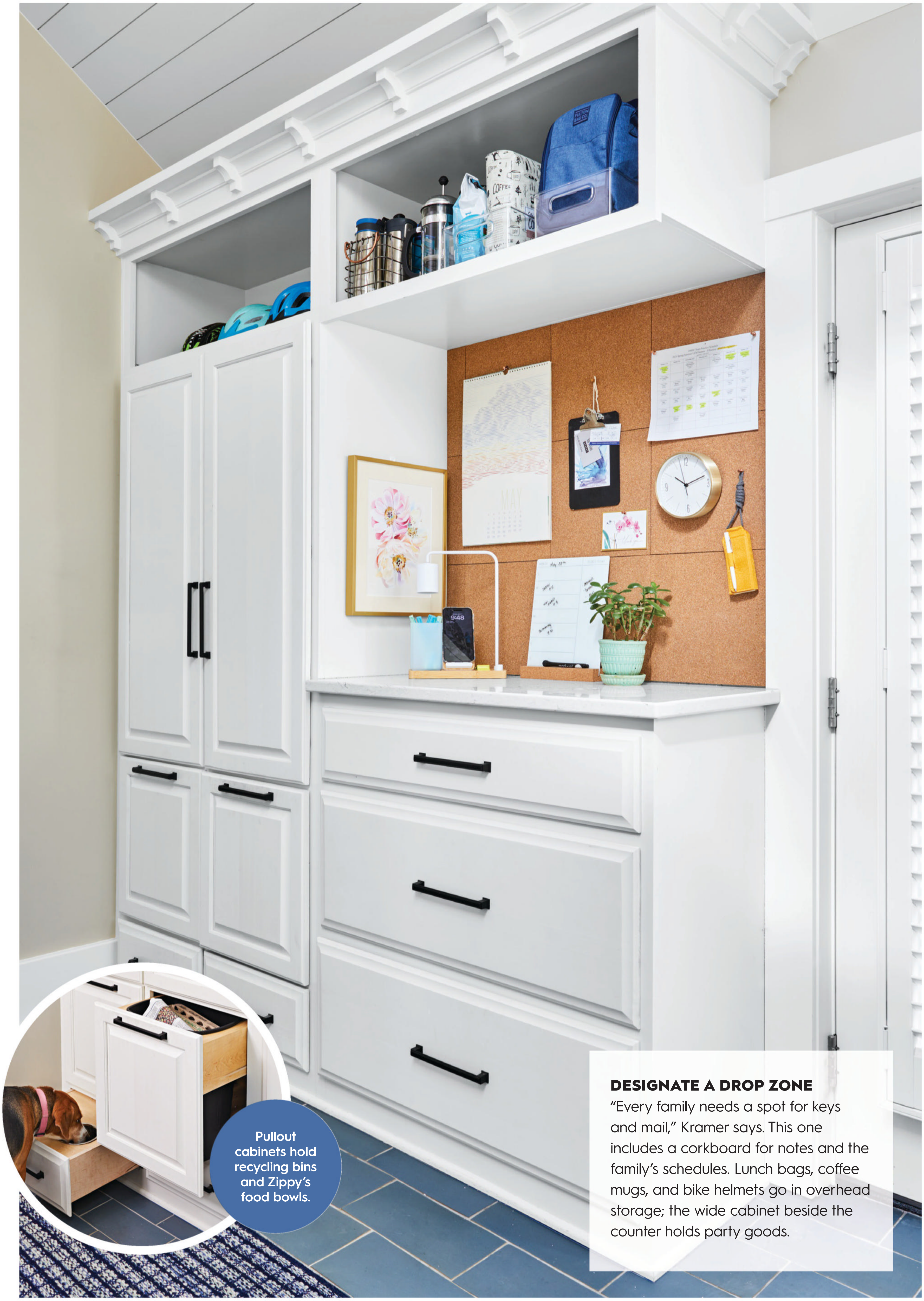
We now have a get-it-all-done room with an exit close to the garage—getting everyone out the door has never felt more convenient.

MARRY FORM WITH FUNCTION
Interior designer Cathy Kramer paired this multipurpose layout, *above,* with modern tile, countertops, hardware, and flooring. "The room is functional and flexible but also beautiful," Kramer says.



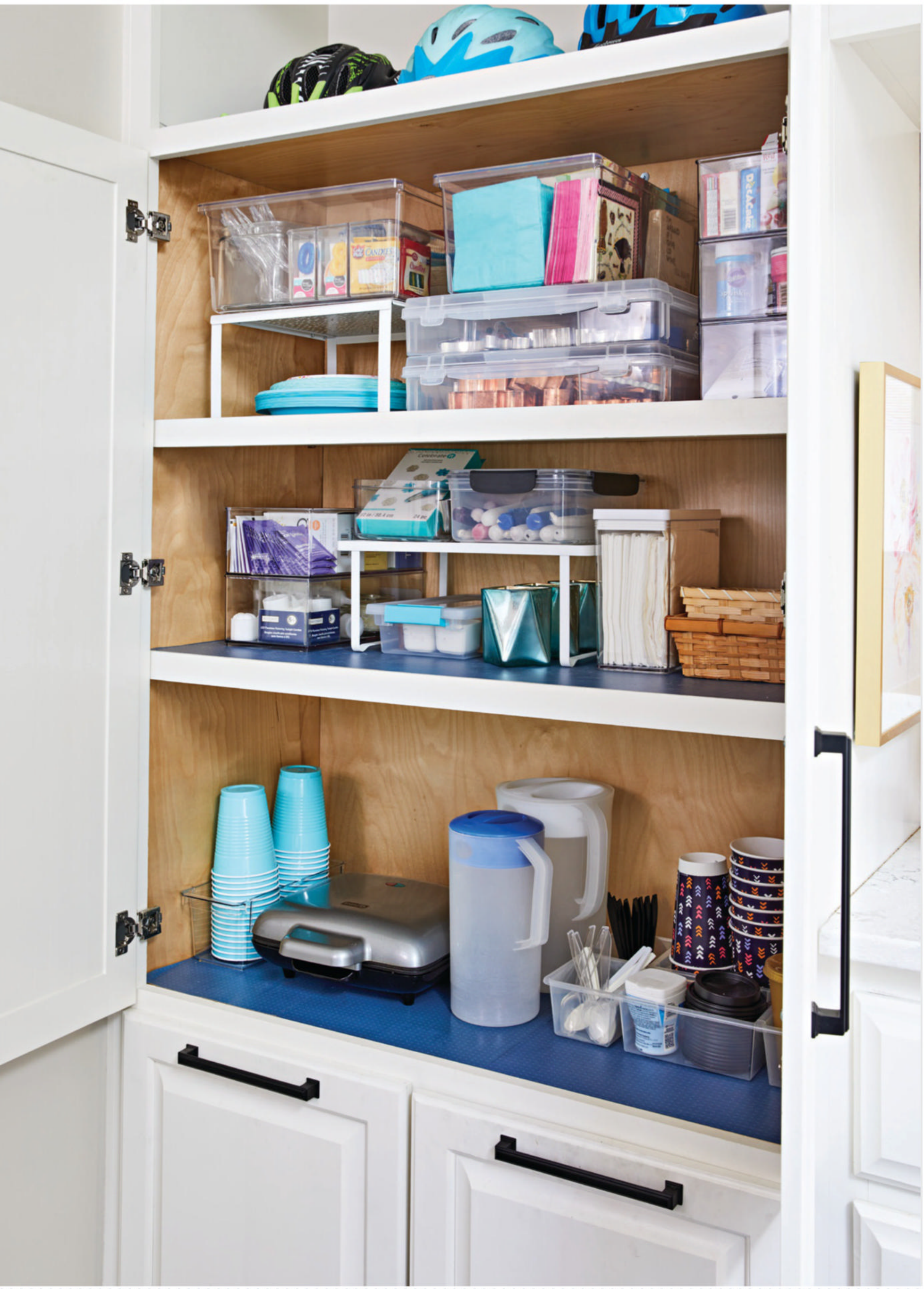
UTILIZE EVERY INCH

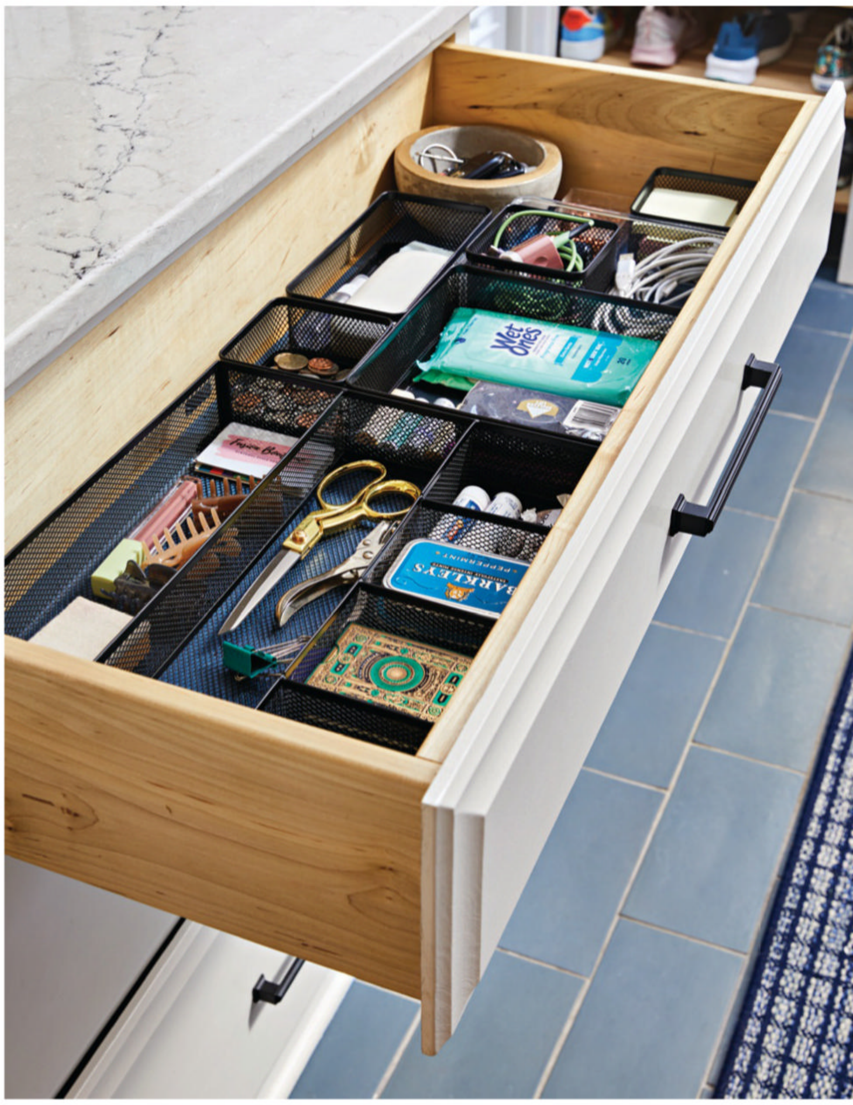
A stack of shelves takes advantage of the mudroom’s high vaulted ceiling to store large serving bowls and platters. A utility sink with a counter workspace provides a spot to tackle stain treatment, quick washups, and planting tasks.

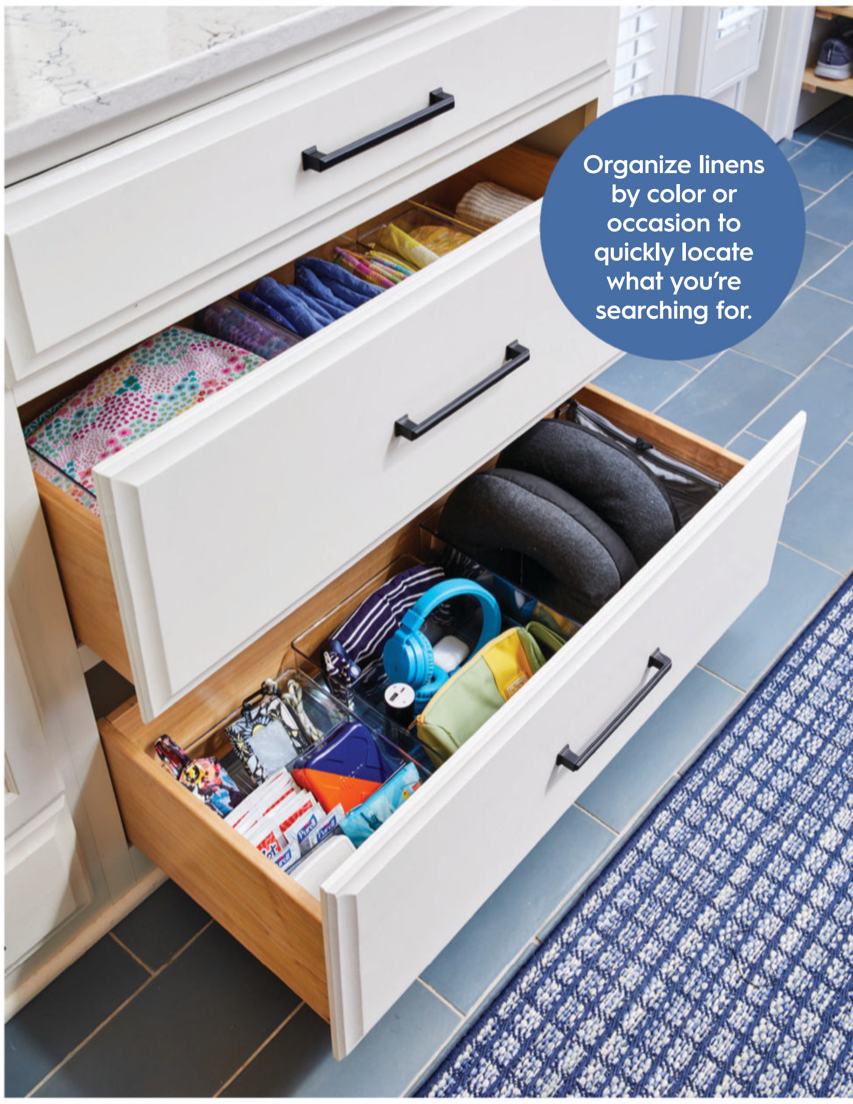


Pullout cabinets hold recycling bins and Zippy's food bowls.

DESIGNATE A DROP ZONE
"Every family needs a spot for keys and mail," Kramer says. This one includes a corkboard for notes and the family's schedules. Lunch bags, coffee mugs, and bike helmets go in overhead storage; the wide cabinet beside the counter holds party goods.







Organize linens by color or occasion to quickly locate what you're searching for.

BUILD IT BIG

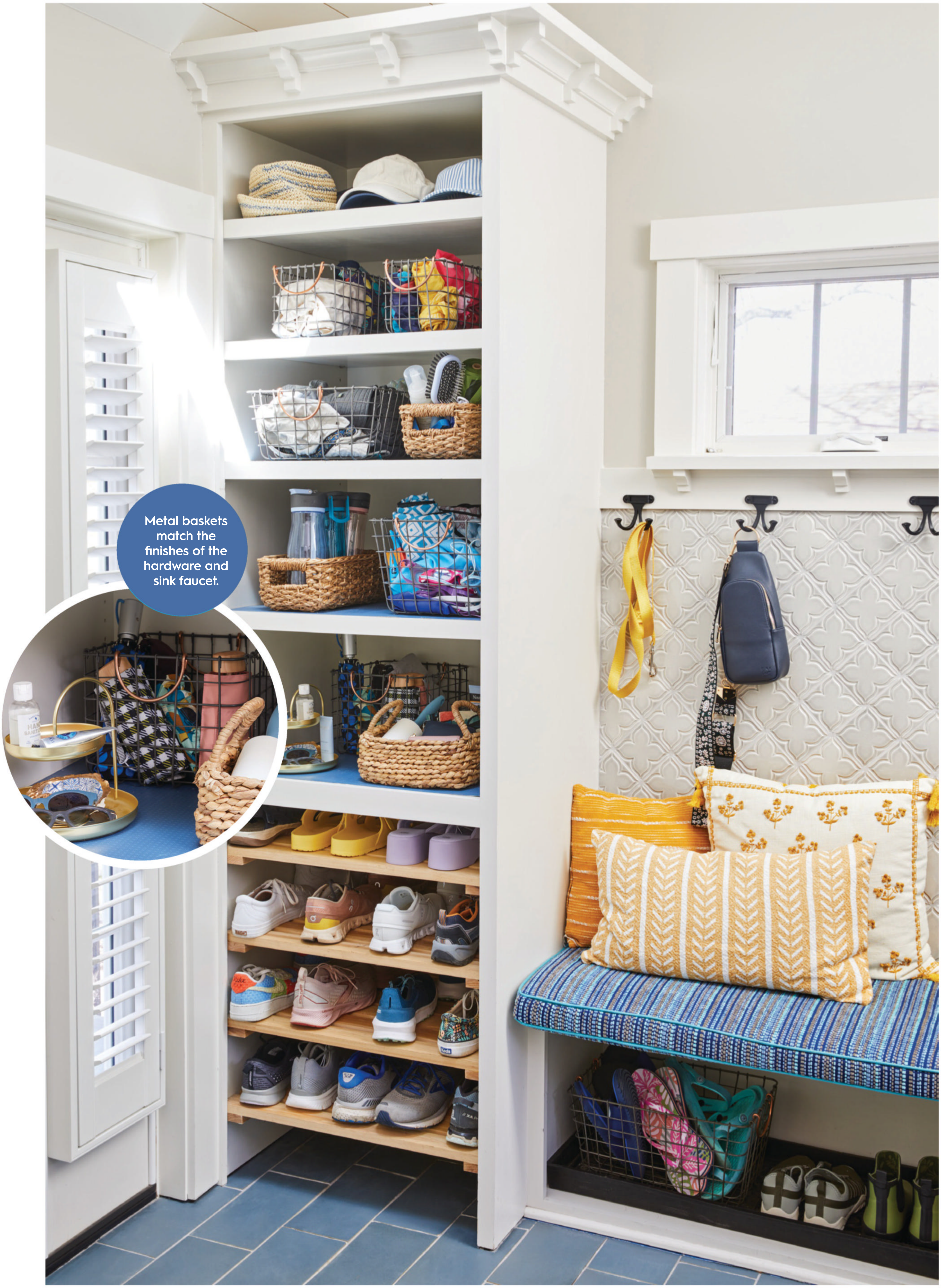
The mudroom is off the kitchen, so Kramer added a hefty cabinet to hold infrequently used items like party supplies and pitchers, *above*. "Wider cabinets have less framework, which allows for more storage," Kramer says.

TAME CHAOS

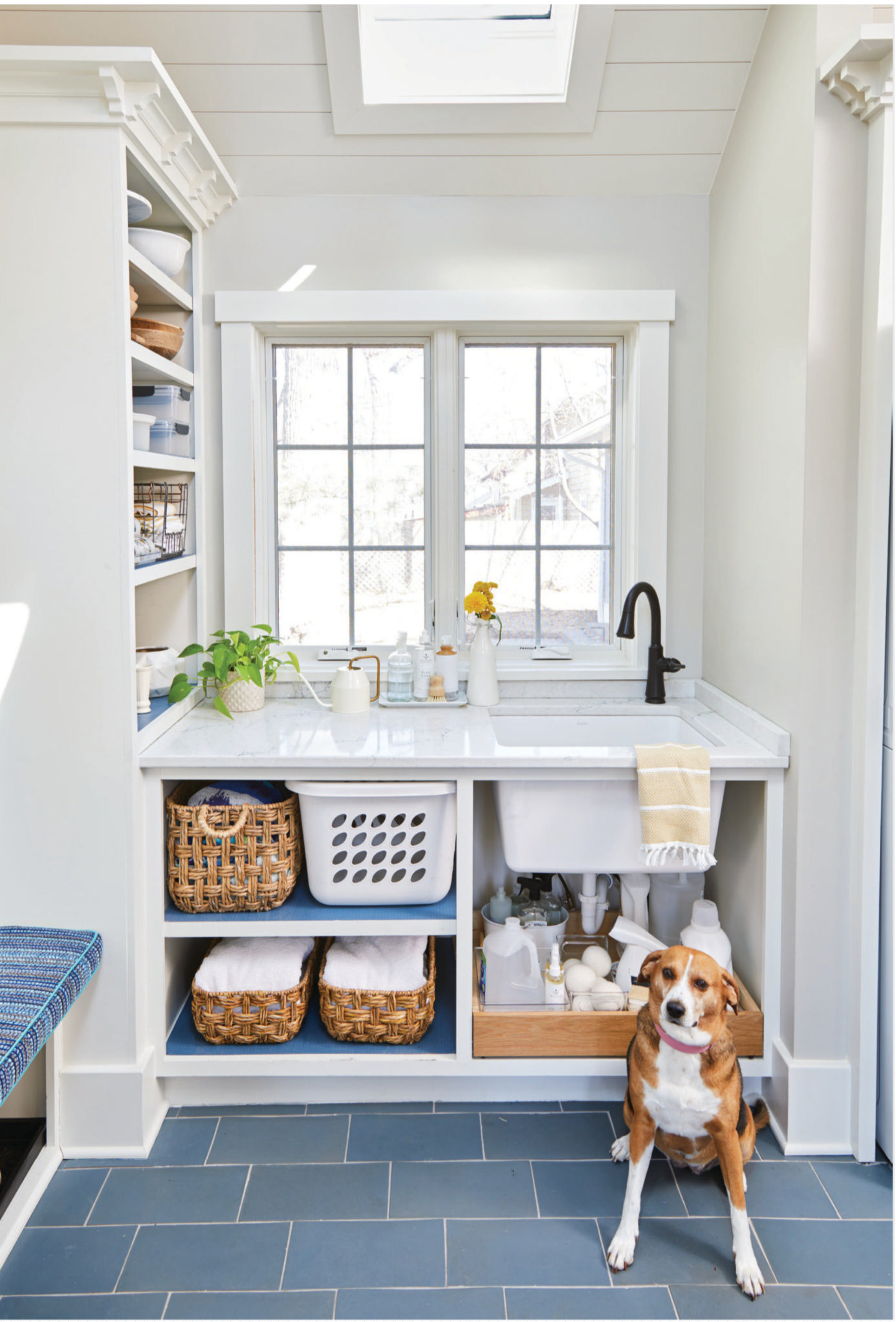
Mesh desk organizers hold cords, lip balm, and other supplies to avoid the drawer under the drop zone, *top right,* becoming a cluttered catchall. A bowl corrals the most important grab-and-go: keys.

SECTION OFF

Deep drawers, *right,* provide a place for bulkier items like table linens. The bottom drawer contains a travel-gear center with clear bins to separate goods by category: first aid, headphones, and neck pillows.



Metal baskets match the finishes of the hardware and sink faucet.



Shelf liners prevent scratches and keep bins from sliding out of place.

SHELVE SHOES

Open shelving by the door paired with a bench organizes shoes and provides a spot to put them on, *opposite*. Trays under the bench hold taller boots, muddy shoes, or cleats, while baskets slide under for dog toys or flip-flops.

WASH UP

Kramer included two shelves under the utility sink counter, *above*. A laundry basket and an oversize woven basket filled with towels live on the top shelf. A pullout shelf fits snugly around the pipes for laundry and stain supplies.

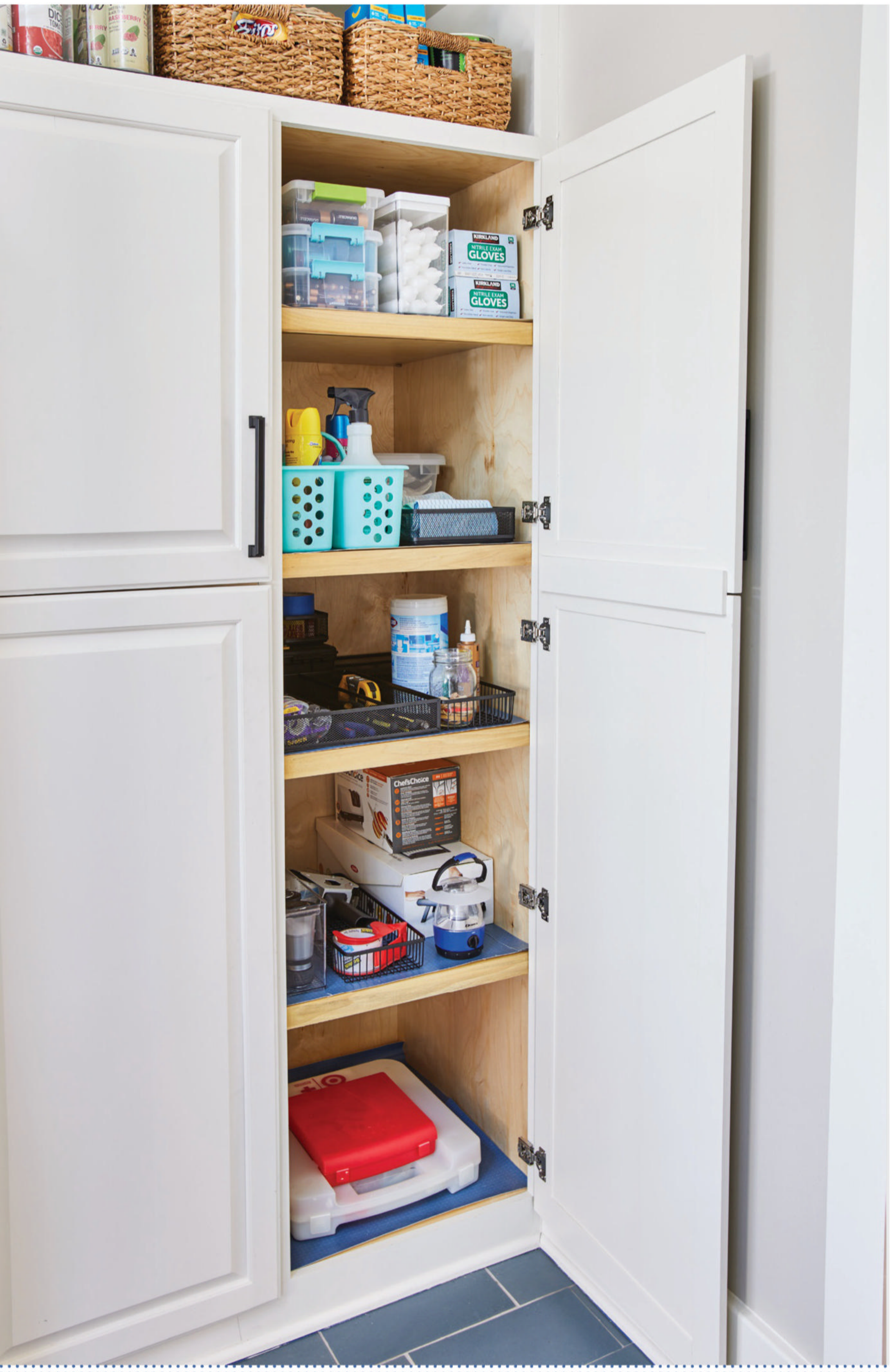
STOP SPILLS

Plastic buckets corral cleaning supplies in a single place under the sink and contain potential messes, *top right*. The open shelving makes it quick to grab laundry items or rags when putting in a load or cleaning up a spill.

CHECK HERE
Unwieldy brooms, mops, and a stepladder used to live in the basement or in random closets. A dedicated cabinet, *below,* means everyone now knows where these items are kept.

SAVE SPACE
The smaller footprint of stacked front-load laundry machines makes room for a broom cabinet and a deep overhead shelf for bulk paper and laundry supplies, *right.*

Install outlets inside cabinets to charge tools like a cordless stick vacuum.



SEARCH NO MORE
A utility cabinet, *above,* partners with the broom closet near the washer and dryer so all necessities—including hand tools, packing tape, bulky items, and backstock—have a designated spot.

SEE IT ALL
Clear food storage containers that hold batteries and candles reveal when supplies are running low, *bottom right.* Stackable options maximize space and separate similar items by size.

SQUEEZE TIGHT
Store more in a small space by decanting snacks from their boxes and placing in a clear bin, *top right.* Wicker baskets with handles are easy to pull down and carry to the kitchen or a counter.

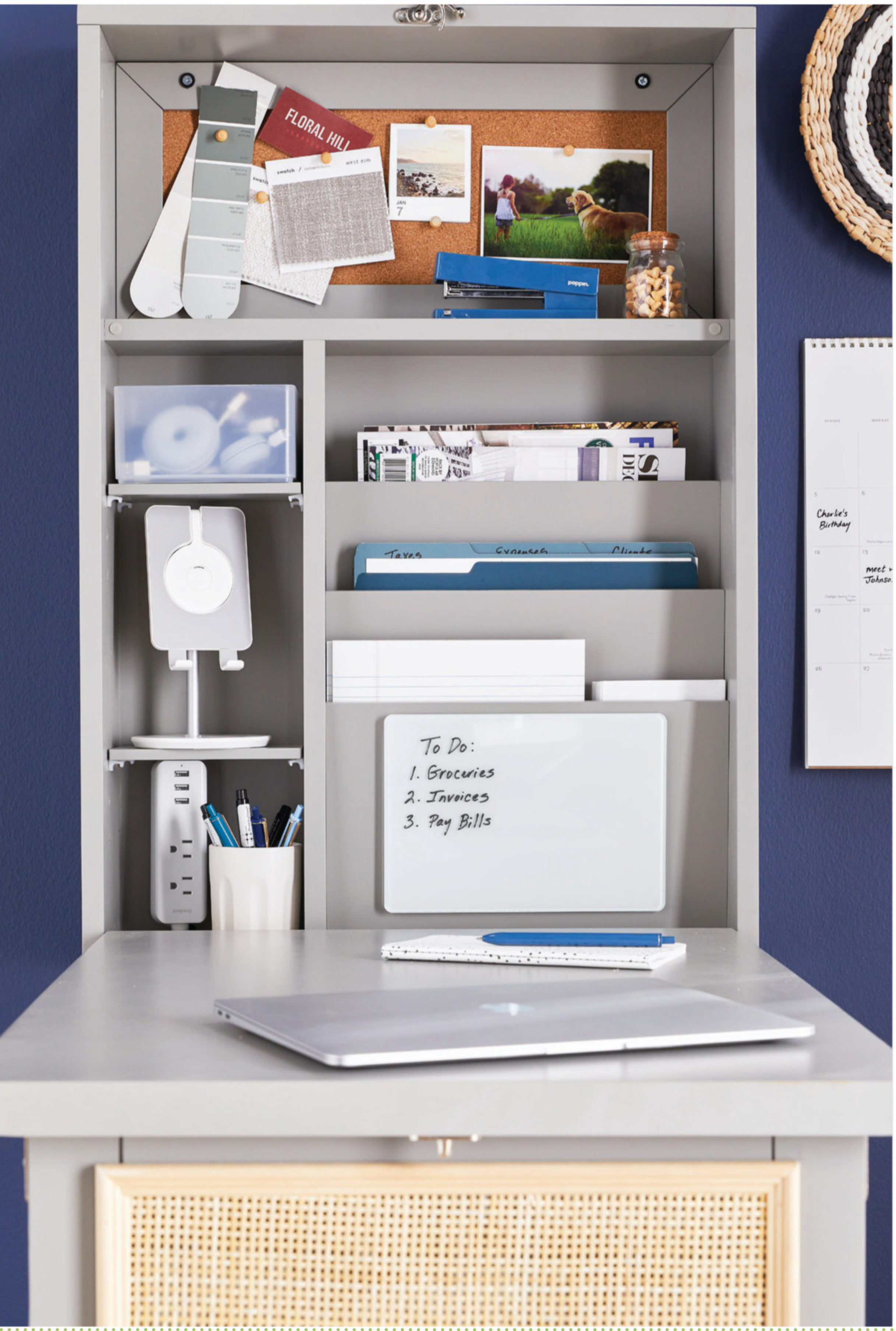
FLORAL HILL
MARCH
Dentist 8am
Charlie's Birthday
Zoom meeting 10am
Meet w/ Johnsons
Zoom meeting 10am
Meet with contractor
To Do:
1. Groceries
2. Invoices
3. Pay Bills

OPEN FOR BUSINESS
Carve out a hardworking niche in minimal space with a wall-mount desk kit. (Search online for “fold-down floating desk” to find similar options.) Before installing the unit, determine how high to hang the desk based on your preferred work surface—a typical desk is between 28 and 30 inches. Level and secure the unit to wall studs following the product instructions.

HOME *work*

No office? No problem. A fold-down desk takes up little space and fits all the essentials you need to pay bills, finish a project, or work remotely.

WRITER **SAMANTHA S. THORPE**
PHOTOGRAPHER **MARTY BALDWIN**
PRODUCER **LESLIE POYZER**



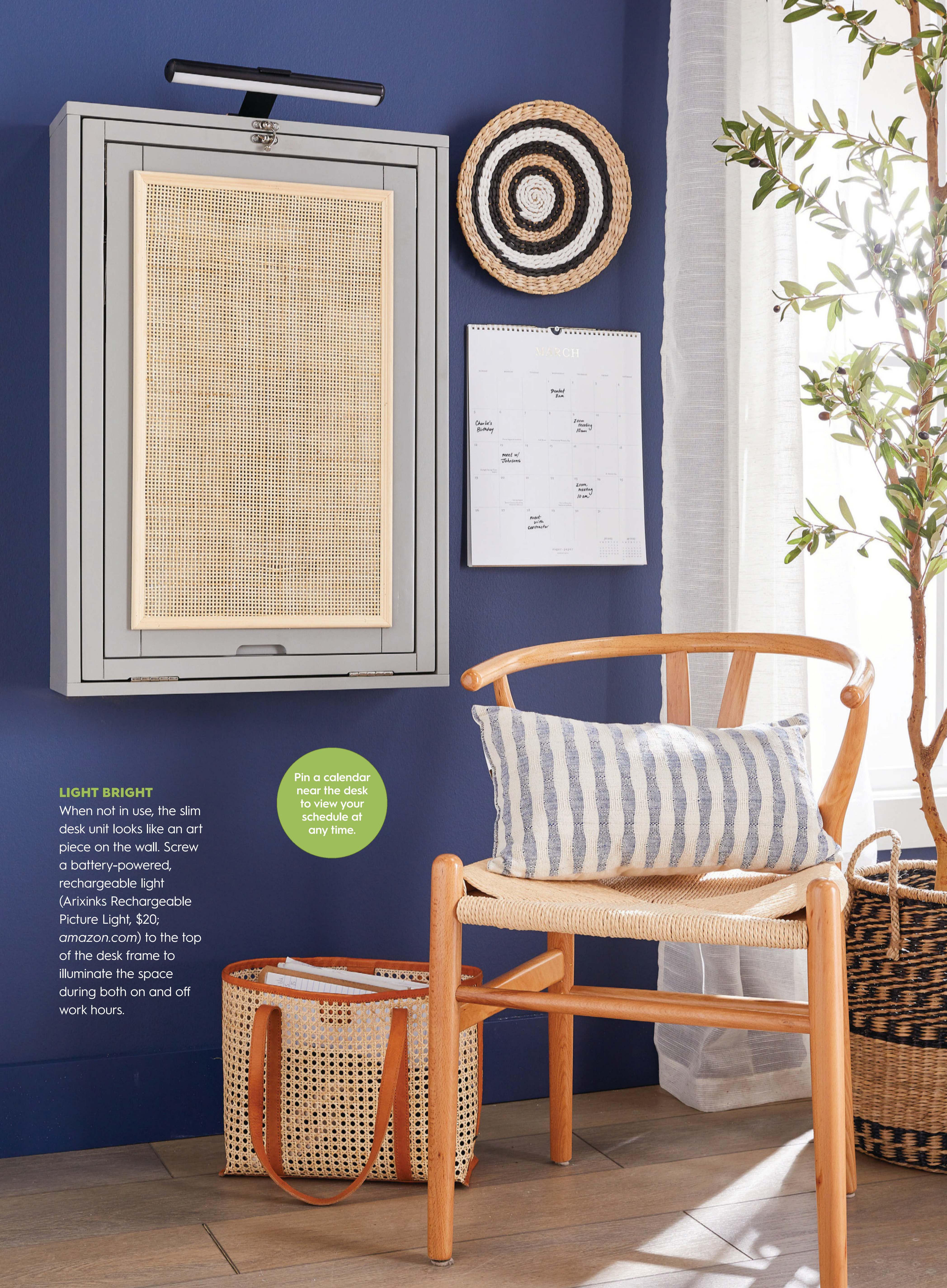
CANE ART

Disguise the desk cabinet behind a framed cane panel made from natural rattan cane webbing, *below*. Measure and cut cane webbing to desired size and soak in a tub of hot water until pliable (this can take up to four hours). Dry off the cane and apply spray adhesive to the back of the cane panel. Adhere to the front of the cabinet, leaving room for the trim. Cut trim molding to size to frame the cane, sanding rough ends. Apply a clear coat of polyurethane to the trim; let dry. Fasten the trim around the caning using ½-inch finishing nails.

CHARGE IT

Keep your laptop and other electronics powered up deskside, *left*. We drilled a hole into the bottom cubby, then sanded the rough edges before threading through a power strip and attaching to the cubby with an adhesive strip. Next, trick out the nooks. This desk came with a corkboard, but we added a small whiteboard. Shelves hold a small bin for cords, a pencil cup, a phone stand, and other office supplies.

Not into cane? Tack on an art print or peel-and-stick wallpaper instead.


MARCH
Dentist 8am
Charlie's Birthday
Zoom meeting 10am
meet w/ Johnsons
Zoom meeting 10 am
meet with contractor

Pin a calendar near the desk to view your schedule at any time.

LIGHT BRIGHT

When not in use, the slim desk unit looks like an art piece on the wall. Screw a battery-powered, rechargeable light (Arixinks Rechargeable Picture Light, $20; *amazon.com*) to the top of the desk frame to illuminate the space during both on and off work hours.

GOAL

GREENIFY YOUR KITCHEN

Cutting back on water, electricity, gas, and disposable items makes your cooking space more eco-friendly and saves on bills too. Use our tips to assess your food prep and cleanup habits.

WRITER **KIT SELZER** ILLUSTRATOR **EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM**

CLEAN SAFELY

Check labels on cleaning products for what the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency calls “signal words.” Danger indicates the most harmful formulas, followed by Warning and Caution. To learn about its Safer Choice seal, see *epa.gov/saferchoice*. For other terminology, go to *ewg.org/guides* and scroll down to click on Label Decoder to learn more about the words on your products.

PLAN MEALS THAT CONSERVE ENERGY

Batch cooking, one-pot meals, and thawing meat in the fridge (not the microwave) reduce appliance use. Other simple energy savers: Match the pot size to the burner and avoid opening the oven door multiple times while cooking.

USING A LID LETS YOU LOWER THE BURNER TEMPERATURE.

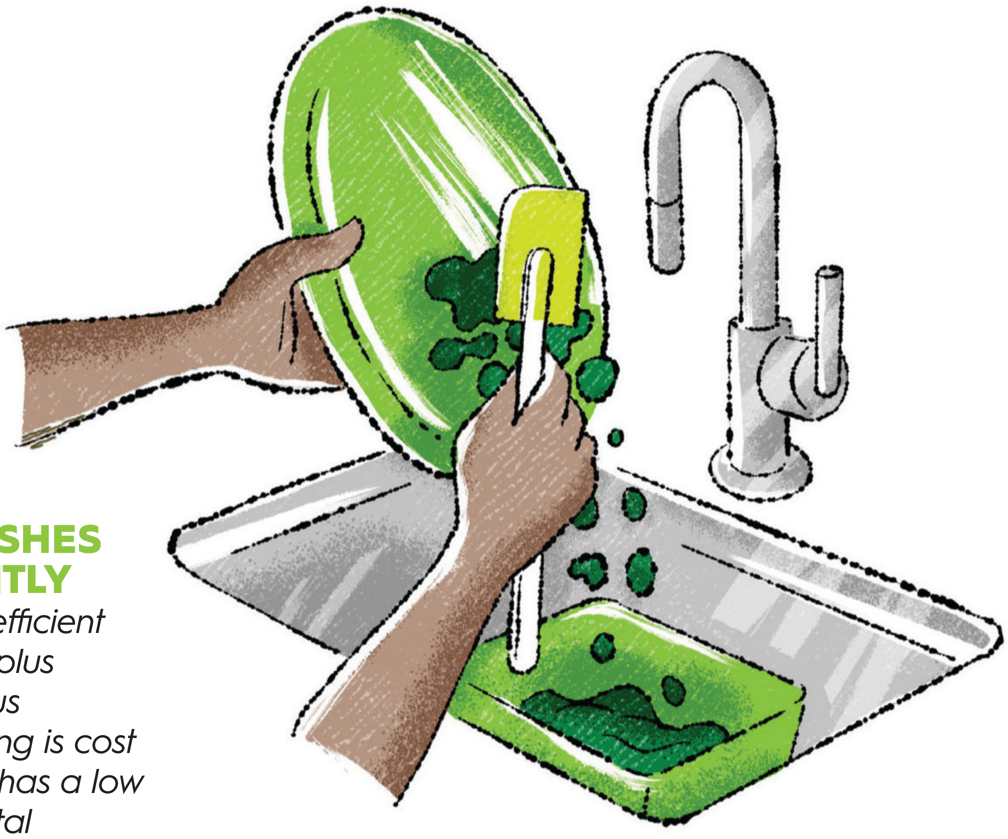
44%

of people say they waste less food when they spend more time at home.

SOURCE: ONEPOLL

LET THE FRIDGE BREATHE

The refrigerator should be full but not stuffed. Free the coils of dust by removing the grate and vacuuming. And though the savings are nominal, it can’t hurt to obey Dad’s edict: Don’t stand too long with the door open.



WASH DISHES EFFICIENTLY

An energy-efficient dishwasher plus conscientious hand-washing is cost saving and has a low environmental impact. Follow these best practices.

IN THE SINK Scrape food from plates, soak and scrub them in sudsy hot water, then dip in clean cool water.

IN THE DISHWASHER Run a full load at an off-peak time (like bedtime) and skip the heated-dry option.

AVOID UNNECESSARY PACKAGING

These shopping habits cut down on trash and save money.

■ Reduce the number of packages you buy over time by choosing bulk options for cereal, pastas, and spices then decanting them into reusable containers at home.

■ Bring store-approved containers to buy foods like dried grains in bulk (leftover pasta sauce jars work well).

■ Use cloth mesh bags for fruits and vegetables, and think twice about produce that's shrink-wrapped or in plastic containers. Beyond its disposable wrappings, precut produce is expensive and can have reduced nutritional value.

OUR PICKS

REUSABLE STORAGE

Glass containers with airtight lids remain one of the best ways to keep leftovers. Try these other options to avoid single-use items:

BEESWAX WRAP
For a tight seal on a bowl. Hand-wash and reuse. $25 for 14"×52" cut-to-fit roll; *beeswrap.com*

SILICONE BAG
A bag that can be heated or chilled. It stands up and zips closed. $12–$14 each; *ziptop.com*

STAINLESS STEEL
Lightweight, unbreakable, and nestable when empty. $21 for set of three; *weesprout.com*

REPURPOSE, THEN RECYCLE

Pinterest is filled with ideas for glass jars, such as creating terrariums and refrigerating herbs in water. And those jars come "free" with your purchase of pickles, salsa, and spaghetti sauce. Minimizing what ends up in your trash can and your recycling bin is the fastest track to zero-waste living.

MORE THAN
1,600
GALLONS OF WATER
THAT'S THE WASTE A FAUCET LEAKING ONE DRIP PER SECOND CAN CAUSE IN ONE YEAR.
SOURCE: ENERGY STAR

COMPOST MIXED INTO SOIL MEANS YOU CAN WATER LESS.

TURN A TRASH CAN INTO A COMPOST BIN. SEE *BHG.COM/DIYBIN.*

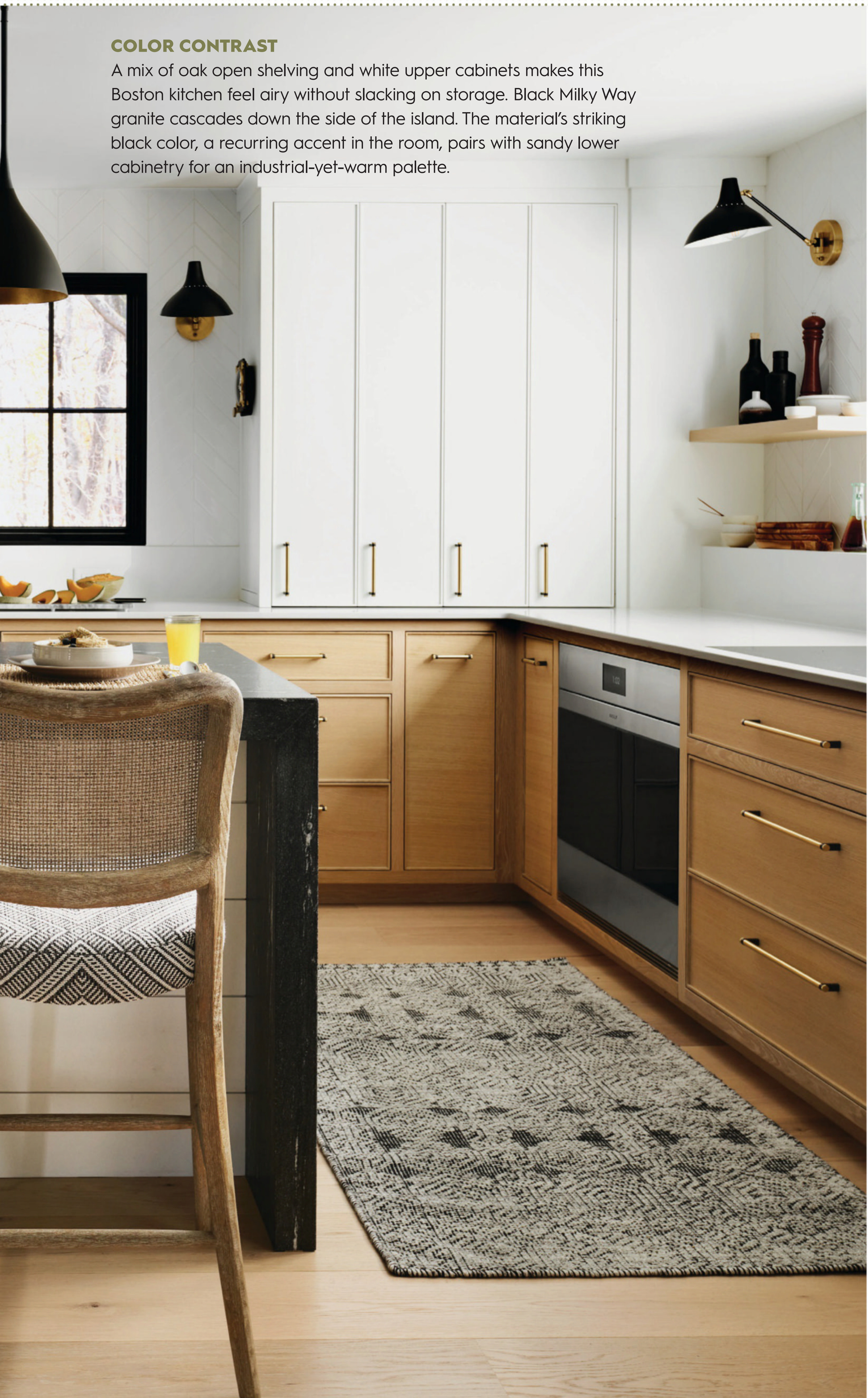
FEED THE SOIL

Think of composting as operating your own little recycling center. That pile of organic material you create over time by combining food scraps with yard waste allows you to buy less topsoil and fertilizer for your yard or garden. It's good for your soil, and you help reduce the methane that food creates in landfills.

EXPANDED *menu*

A full home renovation turned a once-cramped galley kitchen into a storage-savvy chef's paradise that doesn't compromise on design.

WRITER **SARAH HALVERSON** PHOTOGRAPHER **JARED KUZIA** FIELD EDITOR **KARIN LIDBECK-BRENT**



COLOR CONTRAST

A mix of oak open shelving and white upper cabinets makes this Boston kitchen feel airy without slacking on storage. Black Milky Way granite cascades down the side of the island. The material's striking black color, a recurring accent in the room, pairs with sandy lower cabinetry for an industrial-yet-warm palette.

WHEN AMANDA RAMOS FIRST CALLED DESIGNER JENN SANBORN, all she wanted to do was graduate her sons beyond their bunk beds. But, Sanborn says, "When I walked through the house, it absolutely did not represent her." Dark paneling, a nearly unusable office and living room, and a tiny galley kitchen—unfit for the passionate cook—spurred a whole home renovation.

When Sanborn took the main level down to the studs and tweaked the footprint in strategic spots, she expanded the dining room into the former living space and the cramped kitchen into the adjacent dining room. The new layout puts Amanda at the center. Clever storage hides small appliances, puts nonperishables in one place, and keeps knives, utensils, and spices within reach when cooking.

White oak base cabinets wrap the room, while white upper cabinets and a herringbone tile backsplash offer pleasing contrast against black casement windows, light fixtures, and the island's granite waterfall countertop.

The palette leans modern farmhouse in style. "Aesthetically, it looks beautiful and simple at the same time," Amanda says. But when you pull open a cupboard, the real magic reveals itself.

> “A well-designed kitchen should reflect both how you and your family live in the space and your unique personality.”
>
> **—DESIGNER JENN SANBORN**

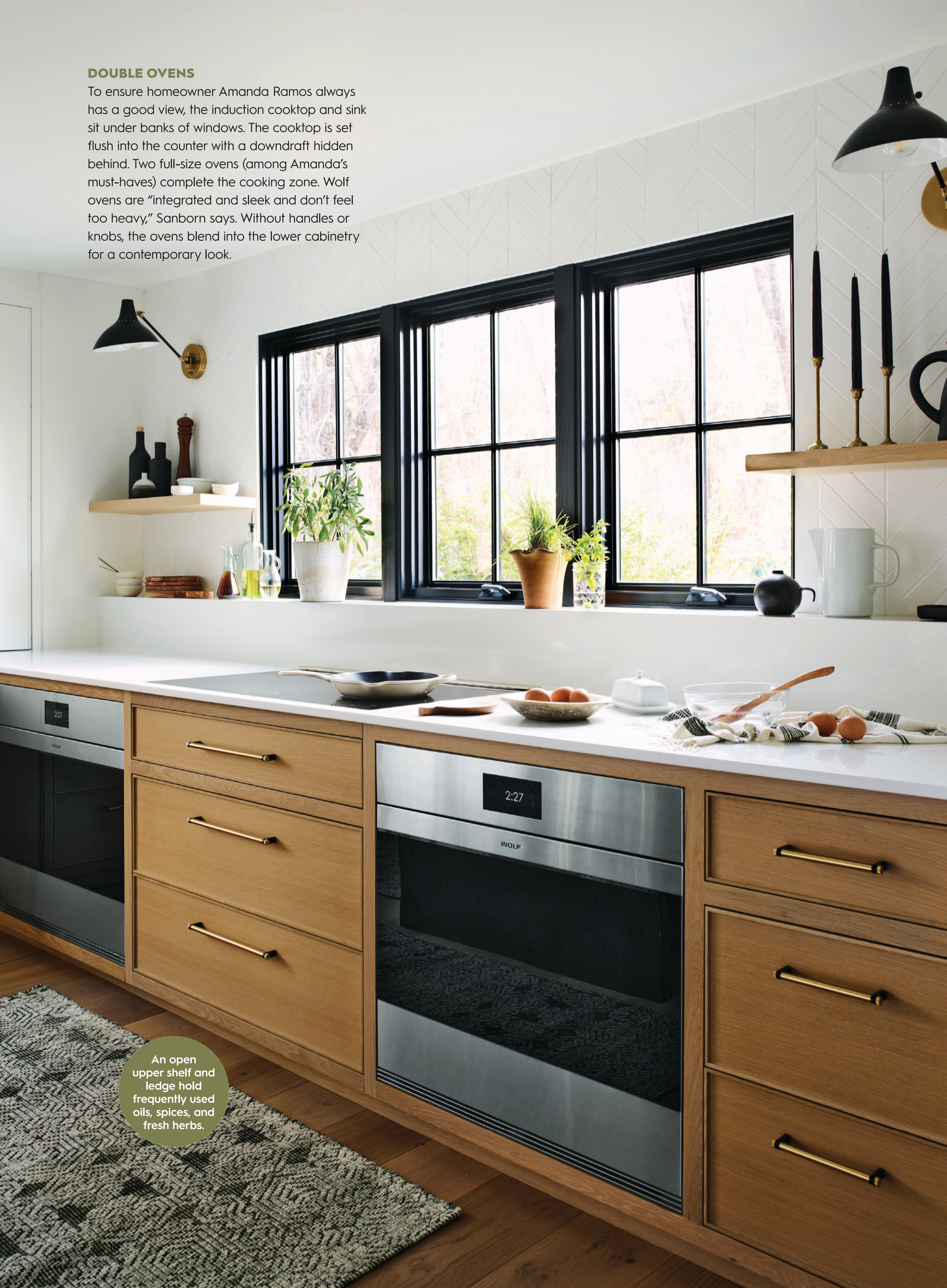
KNIVES CENTER
The organized knives drawer, *above*, is just left of the ovens and range, making it accessible to everyday cooking. Each knife has an individual slot, which helps keep blades sharp; extra slots provide room for the collection to grow.

SLEEK SYSTEM
Designer Jenn Sanborn prioritized views by selecting a telescoping downdraft and open shelving, including the ledge that separates the window from the countertop, *right*. Utensils and downdraft controls are positioned in the drawer beneath the induction cooktop.

Pots and pans stow in the drawers under the stove top for ease of use.

DOUBLE OVENS

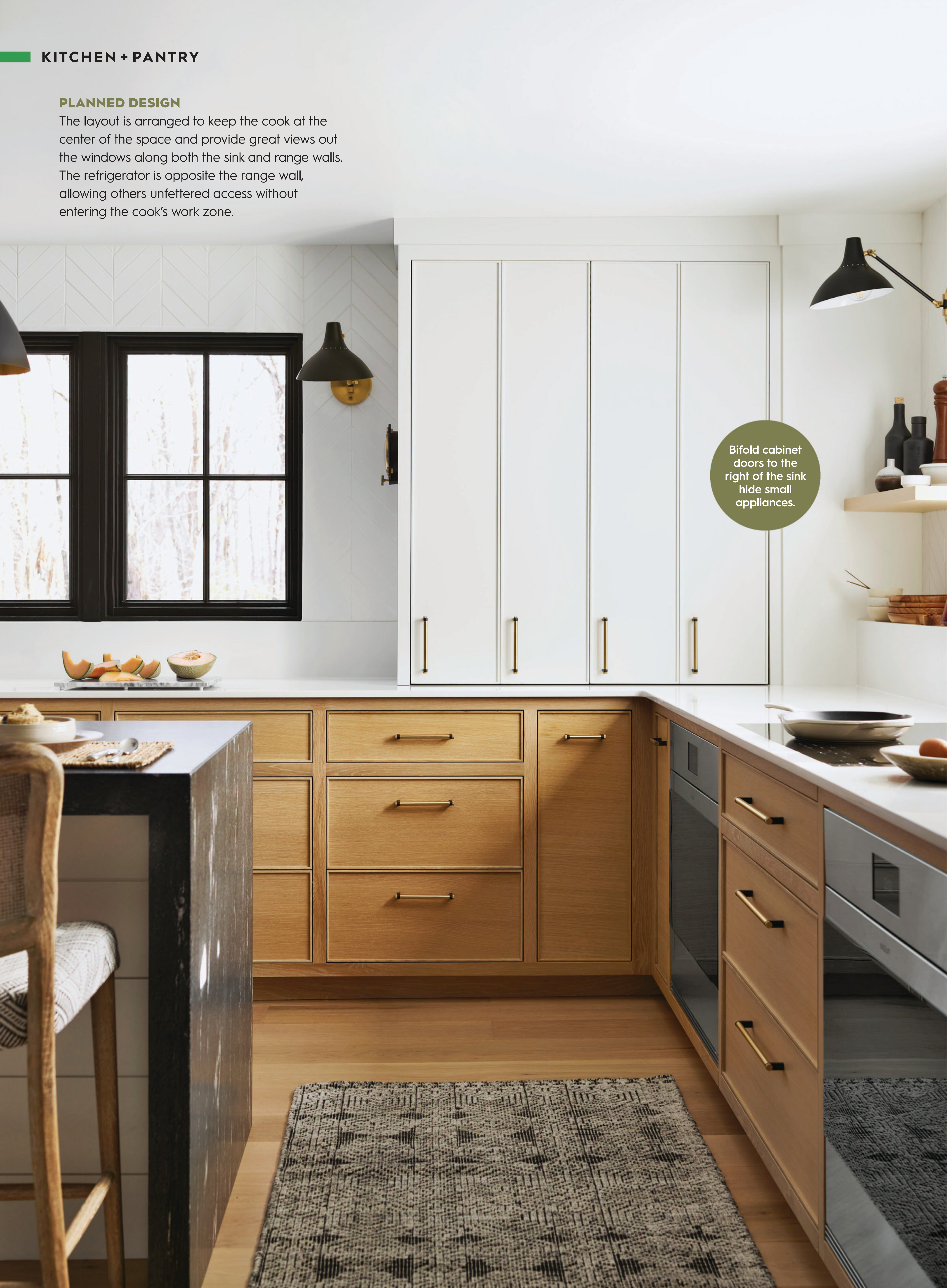
To ensure homeowner Amanda Ramos always has a good view, the induction cooktop and sink sit under banks of windows. The cooktop is set flush into the counter with a downdraft hidden behind. Two full-size ovens (among Amanda's must-haves) complete the cooking zone. Wolf ovens are "integrated and sleek and don't feel too heavy," Sanborn says. Without handles or knobs, the ovens blend into the lower cabinetry for a contemporary look.



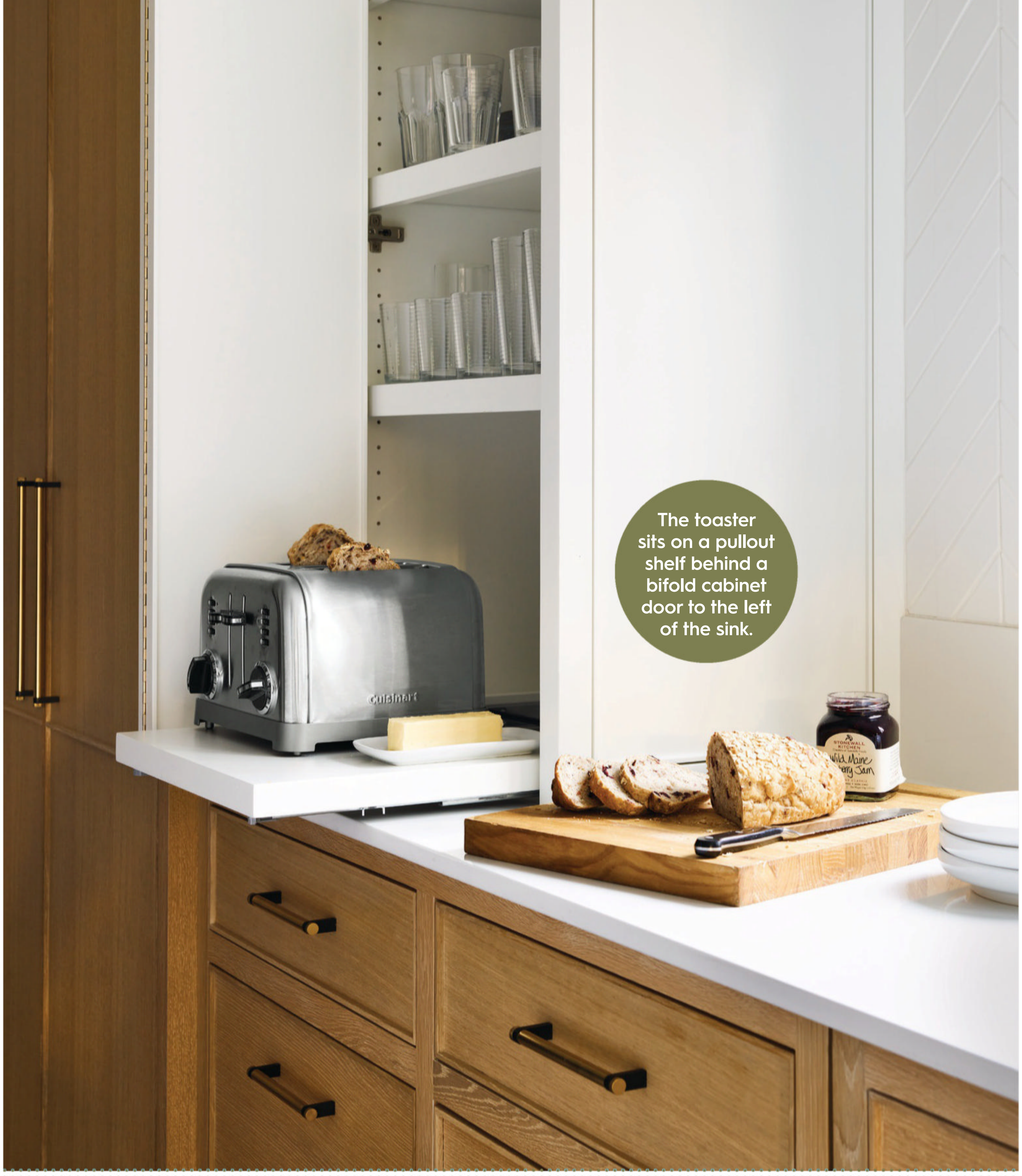
An open upper shelf and ledge hold frequently used oils, spices, and fresh herbs.

PLANNED DESIGN

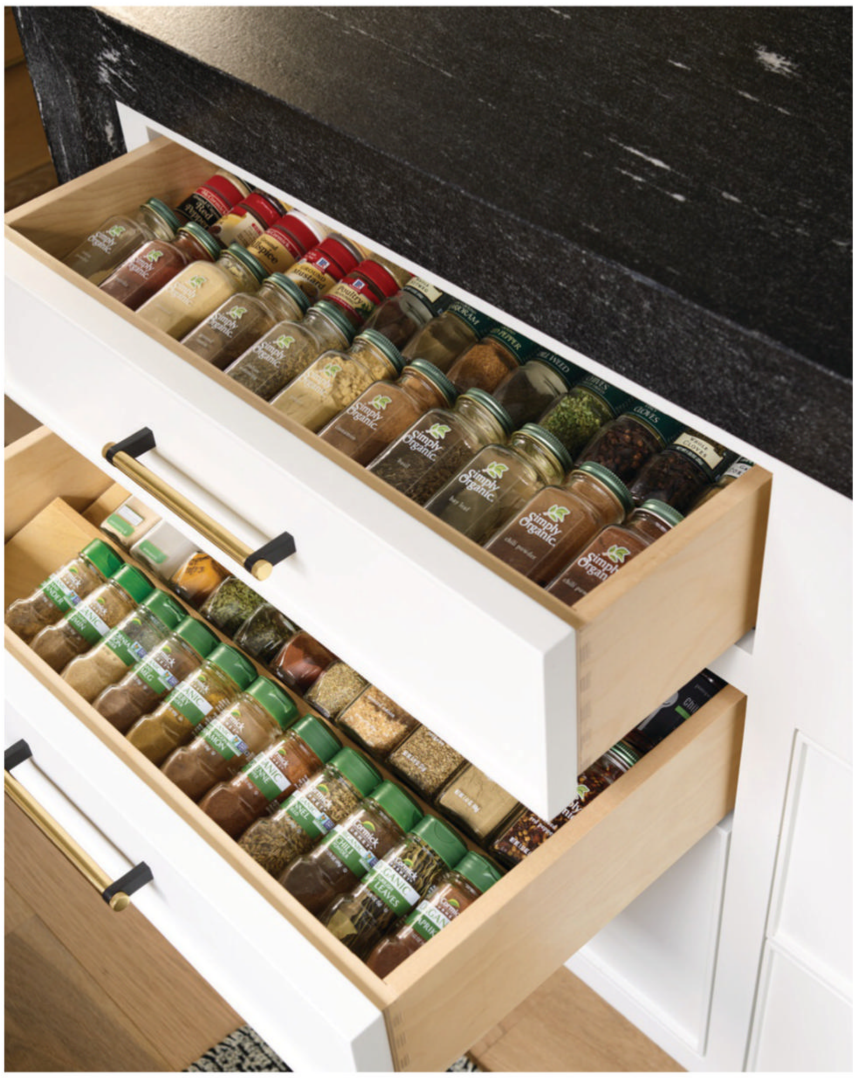
The layout is arranged to keep the cook at the center of the space and provide great views out the windows along both the sink and range walls. The refrigerator is opposite the range wall, allowing others unfettered access without entering the cook's work zone.



Bifold cabinet doors to the right of the sink hide small appliances.

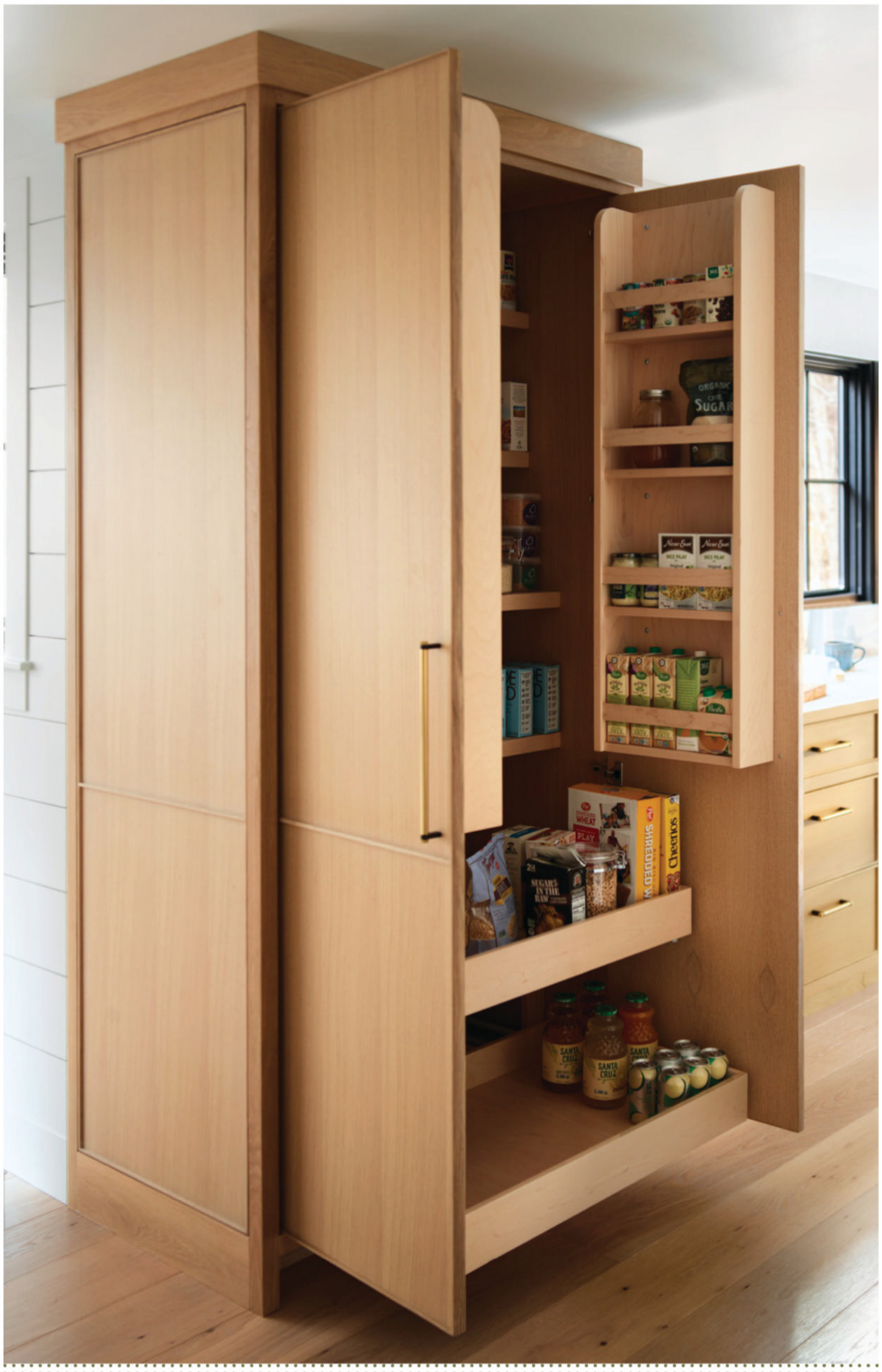


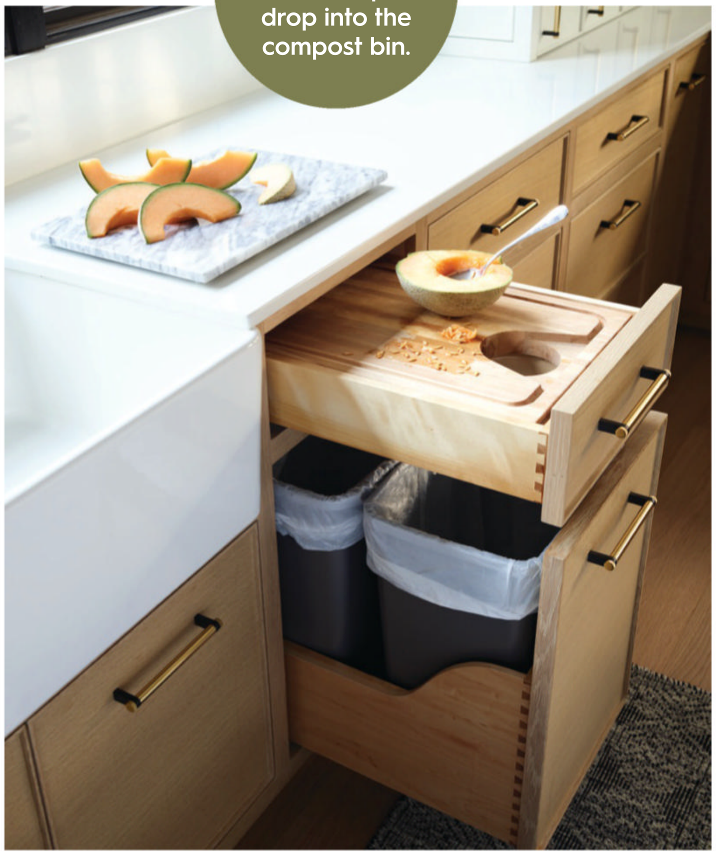
The toaster sits on a pullout shelf behind a bifold cabinet door to the left of the sink.



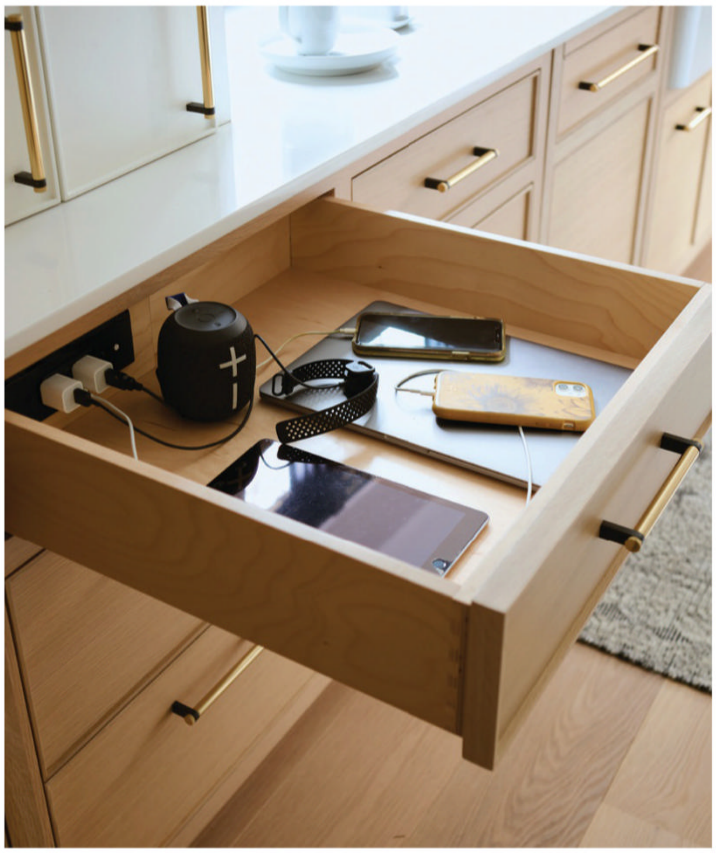
TOASTER CUBBY Small appliances on the counter level sit behind white bifold door cabinets on either side of the sink, *above* and *opposite*. "We wanted the kitchen to feel sleek and organized, so we tucked away anything that we could," says Sanborn. An electrical plug inside this cabinet powers the toaster.

SPICE CENTRAL The spice drawers in the island, *left*, are well-used as Amanda is an avid cook. Angled drawer inserts let her quickly scan and grab jars when cooking and make it easy for her to note when any are running low.





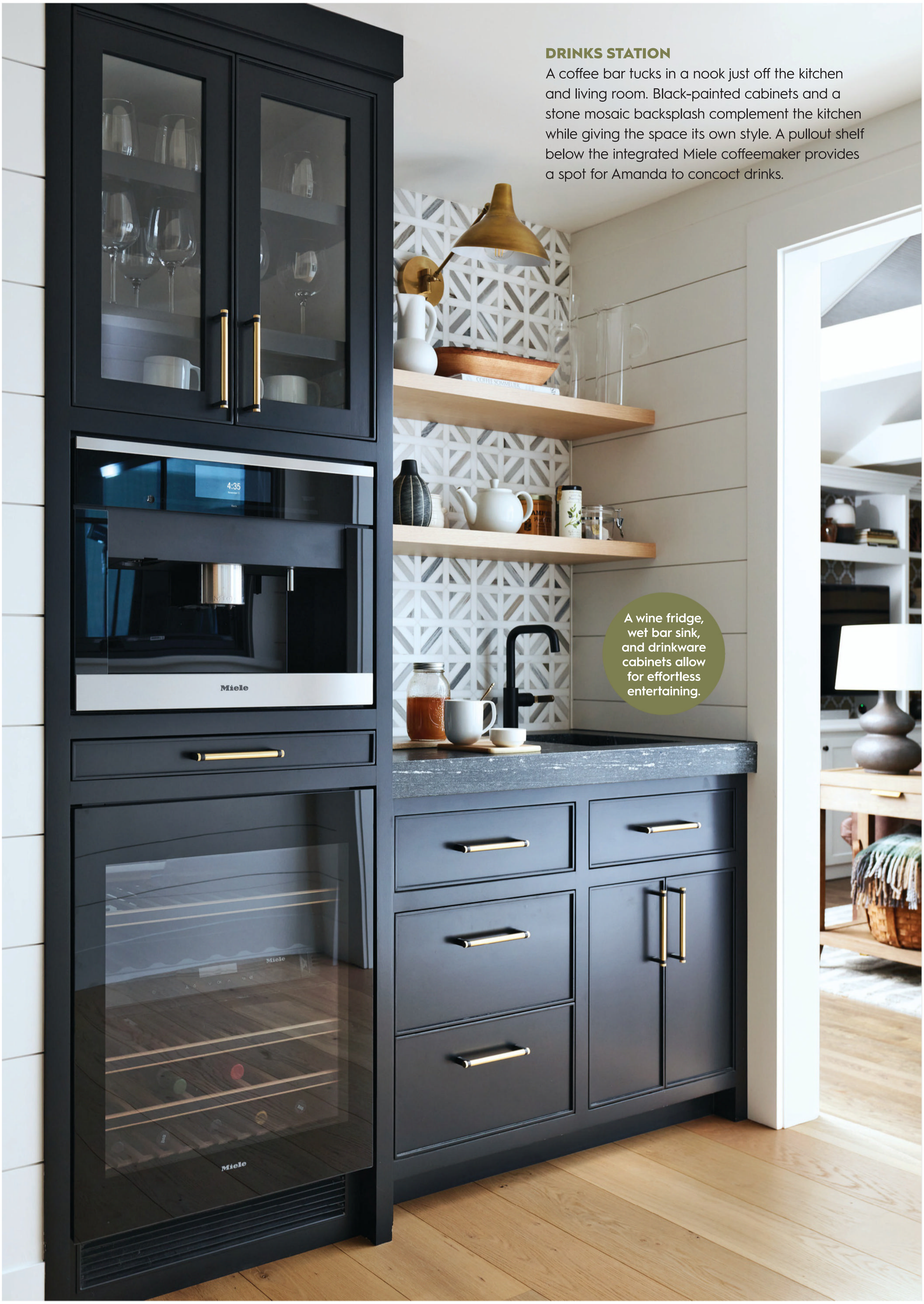
A hole in the cutting board lets scraps drop into the compost bin.



PANTRY CABINET
The double door pantry, *above,* opens to reveal storage on each door for cans and small boxes, two bottom roll-out shelves, and upper shelves that aren't too deep. "To see what you have, it's helpful to have a majority of your food in a central place rather than in upper cabinets," Sanborn says.

CHOPPING BLOCK
A cutting board, set in a perimeter cabinet drawer, *above right*, makes collecting scraps for composting a breeze. The board easily lifts out for cleaning after use.

DOCKING DRAWER
Sanborn designated one drawer (that's near the mudroom) to serve as a charging station, *right.* An electrical outlet installed at the back of the drawer can charge multiple electronics at once while cords stay out of sight.



DRINKS STATION

A coffee bar tucks in a nook just off the kitchen and living room. Black-painted cabinets and a stone mosaic backsplash complement the kitchen while giving the space its own style. A pullout shelf below the integrated Miele coffeemaker provides a spot for Amanda to concoct drinks.

A wine fridge, wet bar sink, and drinkware cabinets allow for effortless entertaining.

the great KITCHEN CLEANUP

Your top-to-bottom, inside-out, behind-the-refrigerator checklist to get your kitchen ready for whatever you throw at it.

WRITER **KATY KIICK CONDON** ILLUSTRATOR **EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM**

start here

There is an ideal sequence for deep cleaning. Maximize your time and effort by checking off tasks in this order. Follow the numbered notes for detailed instructions.

■ **OVEN**
Prep: To loosen grime, heat a sheet pan of water at 350°F for 30 minutes. Meanwhile…

■ **COOKTOP**[1]

■ **DECRUMB BETWEEN STOVE AND COUNTERTOP**[2]

■ **MICROWAVE**
Heat a bowl of water for 5 minutes. Wipe the exterior, then remove the bowl of water and wipe down the inside.

■ **VENT FILTERS**[3]

■ **VENT HOOD**[4]

■ **OVEN**
Wipe glass front and cooled interior.

■ **BREAK TIME**[5]

Read on for the next phase of to-dos.

deep-cleaning details

1 CLEAN COOKTOP

ELECTRIC GLASS TOP Spritz with distilled white vinegar and sprinkle baking soda on grimy spots. Cover top with damp, hot towels for 10 minutes, then wipe clean. —DANIELLE SMITH PARKER **GAS OR COIL BURNERS** Soak grates and burner covers in hot, soapy water. Wipe top with all-purpose cleaner; scrub off stuck-on food with a paste of dish soap and baking soda. Wash, dry, and replace grates and covers. "Turn on each burner to make sure it's dry and assembled properly." —MARCELA BARRAZA **GRILL OR GRIDDLES** Scrub with a pumice grill brick.

2 decrumb around stove

Wrap a damp towel around a butter knife to reach into crevices. Wipe range sides and dials, and check warming drawer for bits of food.

—DONNA SMALLIN KUPER

3

VENT FILTERS

Soak in hot water with dishwasher detergent. "It cuts grease without making too much foam, which would mean lots of rinsing."

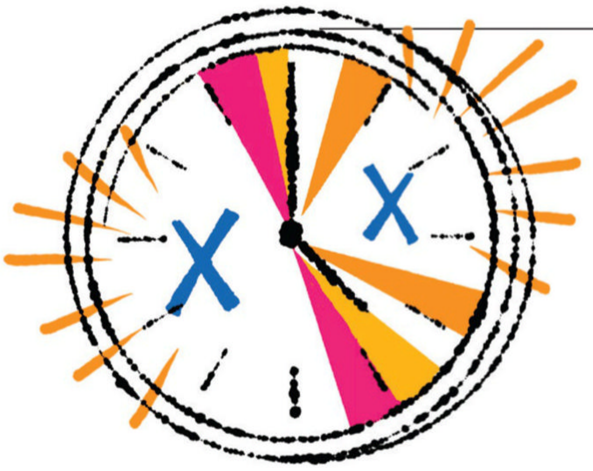
—BARRAZA

[4]

"Wipe. And when I say 'wipe,' I mean with a damp microfiber cloth. It can pick up 99.9% of germs."

—SMALLIN KUPER

The catch It's easy to cross-contaminate surfaces. Fold your cloth into quarters and open to a fresh side every few swipes. Limit kitchen microfiber cloths to only the kitchen.



5

"Don't be discouraged if you can't complete the entire room at once. Break apart the tasks as needed and in conjunction with your schedule." —SMITH PARKER

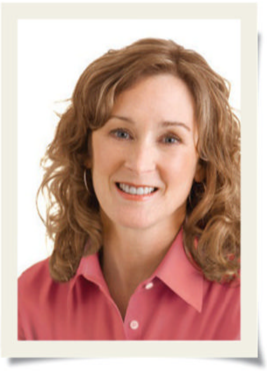
MEET THE PROS

danielle smith parker

Founder of Detroit Maid

DO-IT-ALL HERO

Good Vibes All Purpose Cleaner, $12.50; *goodvibesclean.com*

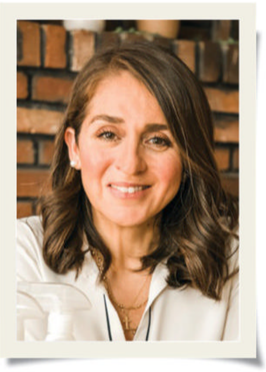


donna smallin kuper

Author of *Clear the Clutter, Find Happiness*

FAVE UPGRADE

Simplehuman Butterfly Step Can, $160; *simplehuman.com*



marcela barraza

Founder of MB Green Cleaning and host of Clean Casa on YouTube

SECRET WEAPON

Plastic paint scraper

the list

Phase two

- **DISHWASHER DEEP CLEAN**[6]
- **GARBAGE DISPOSAL**[7]
- **FAUCET** Distilled white vinegar + microfiber cloth.
- **INSIDE FRIDGE**[8]
- **FRIDGE COILS AND VENTS** Unplug, pull away from wall (protect floors with towels or pads), vacuum on low.
- **FRIDGE DOORS AND SIDES** Wipe down.
- **CABINET DOORS** Wipe with a soft cloth + distilled white vinegar or Murphy's Oil Soap. Dry.
- **CABINET HARDWARE** Dish soap + baking soda.
- **DRAWERS AND SHELVES** Empty, vacuum, wipe.
- **COUNTERTOPS**[9]
- **BACKSPLASH** Wipe.
- **SINK**[10]
- **FLOORS**[11]

DISTILLED WHITE VINEGAR
BAKING SODA

6

dishwasher deep clean

step 1

Place 1 cup distilled white vinegar on the upper rack, and run a hot-water or sanitize cycle. Follow with a baking soda rinse: Sprinkle 1 cup baking soda across the bottom and run rinse cycle. —SMITH PARKER

step 2

If your dishwasher doesn't have a built-in disposal, it has a filter that needs monthly cleaning. Check your manual for the filter's location (it could be on the bottom below the spray arm), pull it out, brush clean with soapy water, and rinse well, Barraza says. Wipe out filter bracket, then reassemble.

step 3

Wipe around the door seal with a wet sponge or cloth. Skip harsh chemicals; you don't want to dry out the rubber. —SMALLIN KUPER

step 4

Wipe exterior and give buttons a once-over. Check supply of dish soap and detergent.

---

stainless steel TWO WAYS

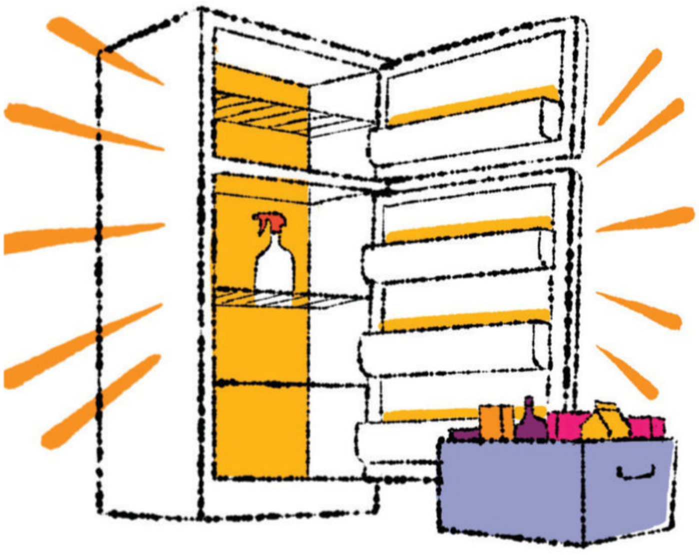
- **Put a dot of dish soap on a damp cotton cloth. Wipe with the grain and dry any water streaks with a clean towel. For shine, finish with a few drops of mineral or baby oil.** —SMITH PARKER
- **Wipe with a citrus furniture polish like Pledge. "It leaves a protective coating that repels dirt and fingerprints."** —SMALLIN KUPER

7

GARBAGE DISPOSAL

Pour in a little vinegar and baking soda, let bubble, and run disposal with cold water.

Don't miss the disposal flaps, whose purpose is to prevent bits of food from flying out. Scrub under the flaps with a toothbrush and all-purpose cleaner. (Skip the sink for now; you'll get to it later.) —SMALLIN KUPER



8

INSIDE THE FRIDGE

Remove items one section at a time. Toss anything past its prime. Scrub shelves, drawers, and tracks with food-safe cleaner. Smallin Kuper likes the small Force of Nature appliance; it turns tap water, salt, and vinegar into a nontoxic disinfectant. (Starter Kit, $70; *forceofnature clean.com*) Avoid hot water on cold shelves; they could crack.

9

COUNTERTOPS Barraza argues for keeping it simple. "Use a damp cloth with a few drops of dish soap, then dry." If you use a sealer, now's a good time to apply it. Here are our picks for common materials:

STONE	WOOD	GROUTED TILE
Granite Gold Sealer	Boos Block Mystery Oil	511 Impregnator Sealer

[10]

SINK

Porcelain, enamel, or fiberglass: Use a soft sponge or cloth and clean with dish soap, baking soda, and warm water.

Stainless steel: Bar Keepers Friend

11 floors

[BARRAZA'S RULES]

DO floors last. Save yourself the redo.

DON'T skip sweeping. Reach under cabinets and appliances.

DO the toe-kicks. Sweep, then wipe with all-purpose cleaner.

DO use the right mop. For smooth surfaces, Barraza likes a Swiffer because you can attach a wet or dry microfiber cloth. If you have large grout lines, use a deck brush to reach into the pores.

DO use the correct cleaner for the surface. For wood, Bona Hardwood Floor Cleaner; other surfaces, Mrs. Meyers Concentrate.

DON'T waterlog floors, especially wood ones.

odds & ends

GARBAGE BINS Mix soapy water in bottom, brush clean, dry. Clean area around bin with all-purpose cleaner. **SINK WINDOW** It's high-traffic and prone to water spots so needs TLC. **HOT PADS** Launder. **SPICE RACK** Wipe rack and containers. Replenish what's expired or running low. **STORAGE CONTAINERS** Toss damaged or unmatched pieces.

POWER TO THE (puny) *pantry*

No walk-in closet is needed to construct a highly organized, efficient, and—bonus!—aesthetically pleasing food storage system. Let us show you how.

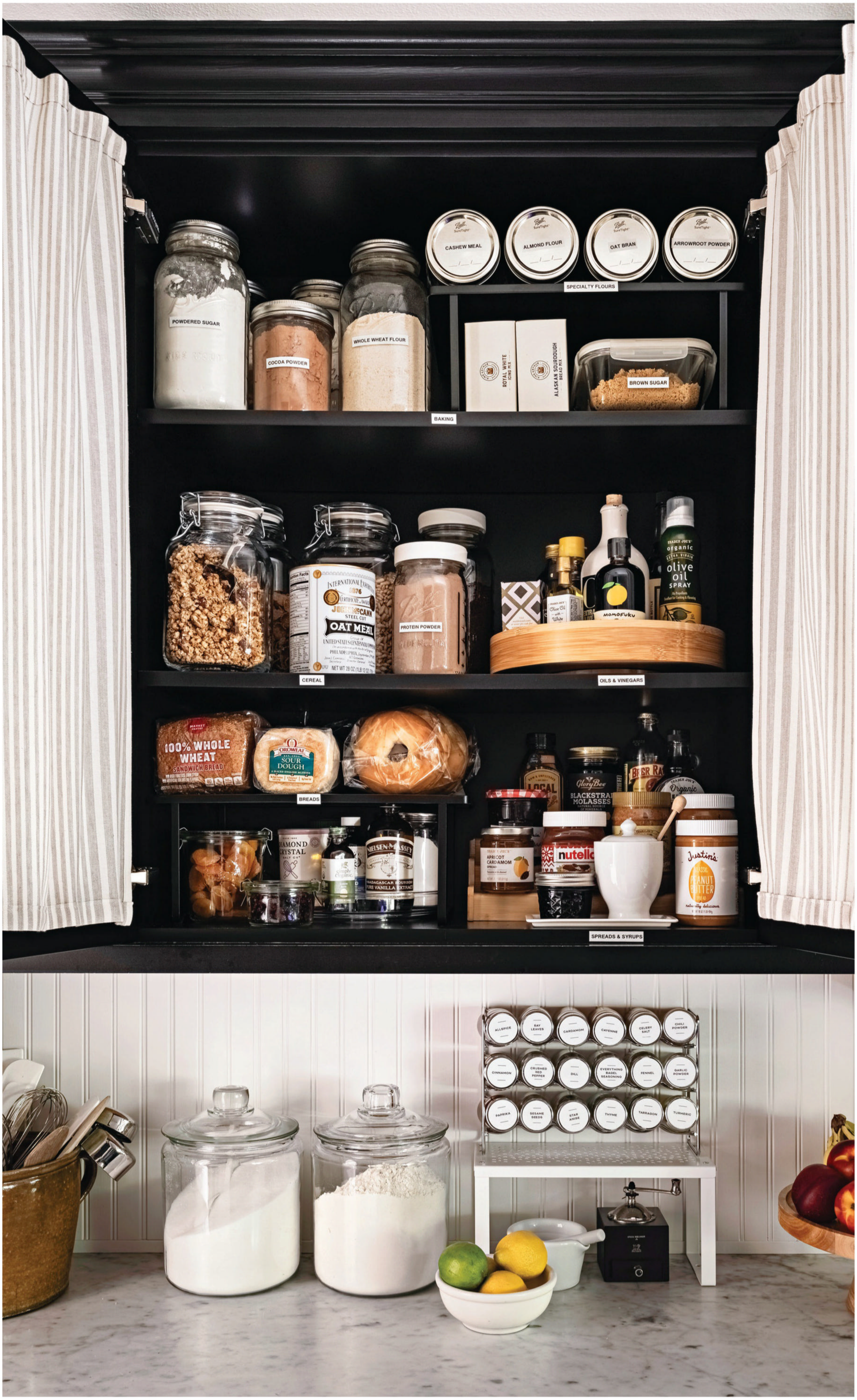
WRITER **AMY PANOS** PHOTOGRAPHER **KARA MERCER** PRODUCER **JANNA LUFKIN**

Start by dedicating one upper cabinet, one lower cabinet, and one drawer to your pantry. Then:

1 **INVENTORY** the foods you typically store, grouping them into categories that make sense to you (snacks, baking, canned goods, etc.). This falls in line with the mother of all organizing principles: Store like with like.

2 **DETERMINE** the optimal location for each category based on usage. What you reach for daily goes front and center; what you use only occasionally goes up high or down low. Give each group a home and a label so everybody will know where to find something and where to return it. This will help the pantry stay organized.

3 **SUBDIVIDE** each category's space using organizers that help you see and reach all the items. That might mean tiered shelves for cans or a turntable for condiments. Before you shop, know the purpose and size of each organizer you need.



SHELF HELP

GRUB *HUB*

Store more in your cabinet and be able to see it all.

1 GLASS JARS

Good old Mason jars can't be beat for affordable, airtight, nonplastic storage. The wide-mouthed style works best for food. We put baking ingredients in labeled jars up high.

2 HELPER SHELVES

Max out vertical space in a structurally sound way by adding smaller shelves—no more precarious stacks. Stacking Shelf, $10; *target.com*

3 FOOD ZONES

Make your most popular food categories easiest to reach. This house loves breakfast, so we put granola, oatmeal, and breads at eye level.

4 SPECIALIZED ORGANIZERS

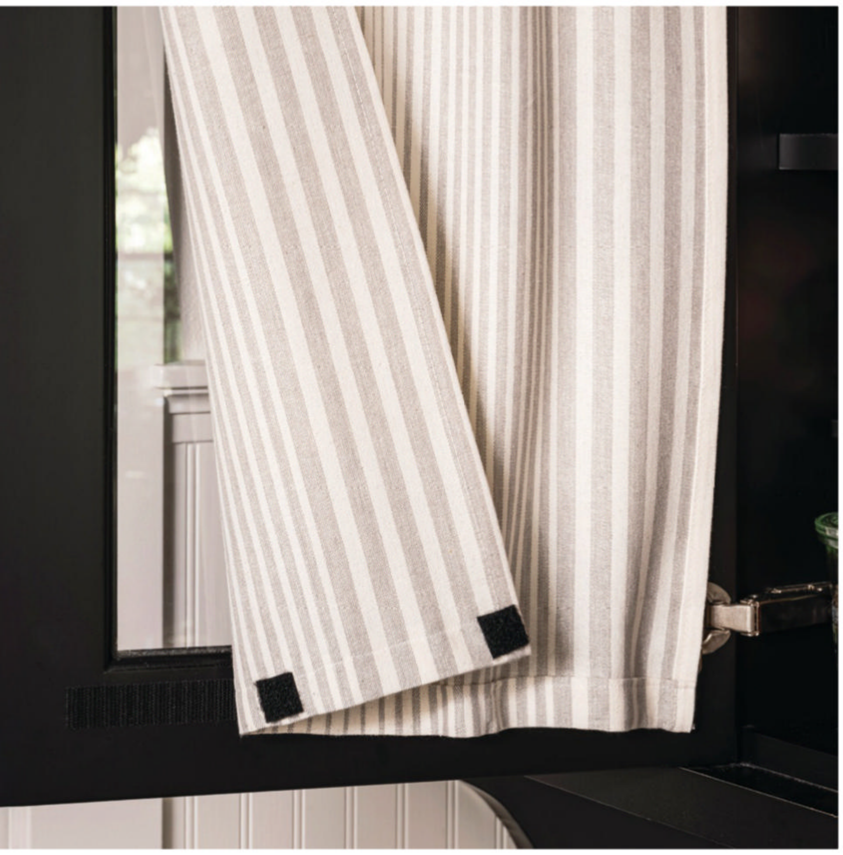
Tall, skinny bottles of oils and vinegars fit on a sturdy turntable with high sides. A tiered rack puts spreads and syrups in sight. Bamboo Lazy Susan, $18; Bamboo Expandable Spice Rack, $15; *walmart.com/BHG*

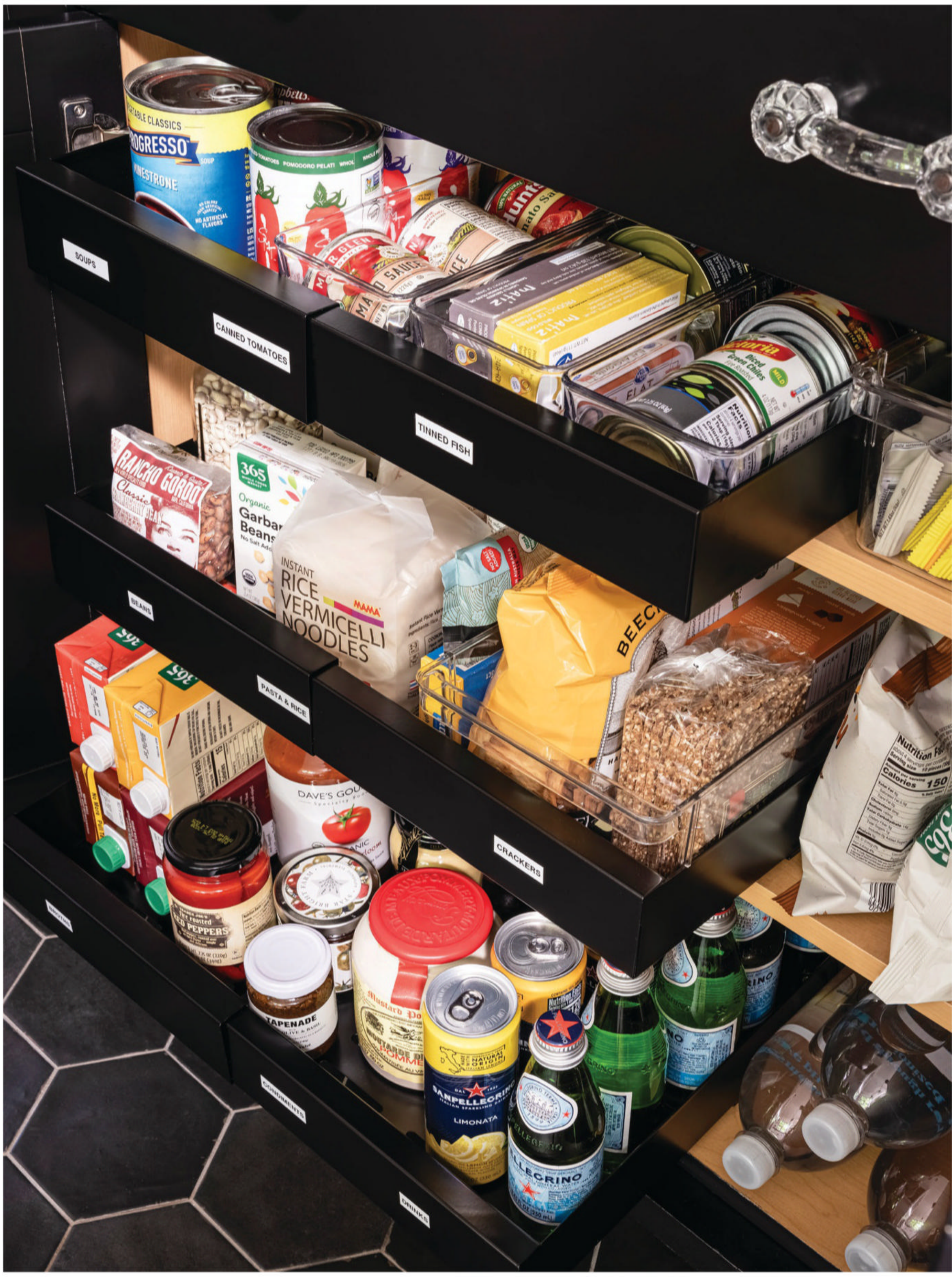
5 SPICE STATION

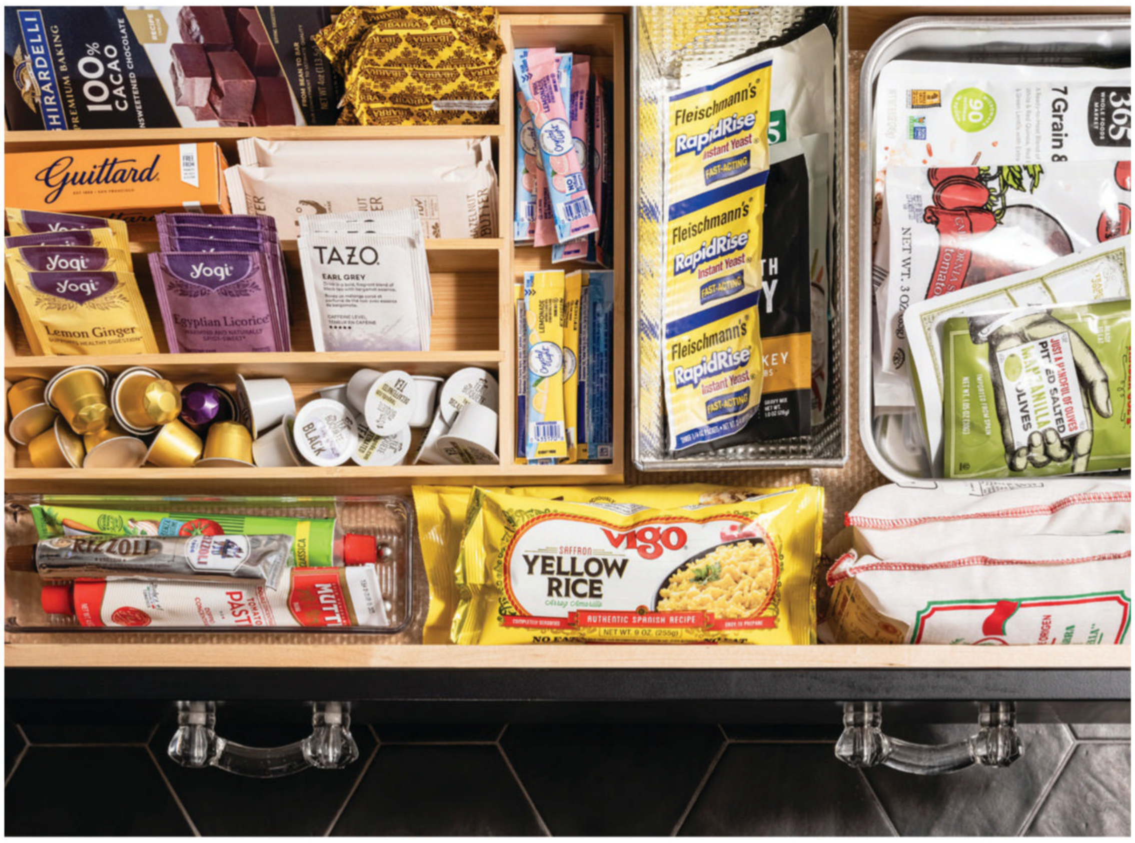
Store your favorites right on the counter where they won't get lost. Polder Chrome Spice Rack, $45; *containerstore.com*

COVER IT UP

Toweling fabric is the shortcut to a no-sew curtain for a glass-front cabinet, *below*. It comes 16 inches wide with finished edges. Just cut to length, hem with iron-on seam tape, and attach to a door frame with hook-and-loop tape, creating gentle pleats. Moda Toweling in Putty and Cream, $8 per yard; *etsy.com*







MAKE A DRAWER DO MORE

A drawer, *left*, is a handy spot for small, individually wrapped items plus bags and packets that don't stand nicely on a shelf. Use a mix of small bins, loaf pans, and a silverware organizer to partition the drawer. Silverware Organizer, $10; *walmart.com/BHG*

RETROFIT WITH PULLOUTS

Slide-out shelves, *above*, are the key to making a lower cabinet work as a pantry, and they're easy and affordable to install on top of your existing shelves. Subdivide the sliders using clear bins and store small cans on their sides so the labels are visible. Godboat Cabinet Organizer, $46 each; *amazon.com*

DECANTING 101

When and why is it smart to take your food out of the package it came in and place into a different container? Allow us to pour out some knowledge.

WHY SHOULD I DO THIS?

Decanting takes some effort, but it's worth it if you want to:

- Keep foods fresher than they would stay in their original packaging.
- See at a glance what you have and when you need more, which reduces overbuying and wasting food.
- Fit more into your food storage space and make it look Instagram-worthy.
- The original container is too large, awkward, or flimsy to store efficiently.

OK, WHAT SHOULD I DECANT?

You do not need to decant everything that gets stored in your pantry. That would be burdensome. Focus on foods that meet one or both of these criteria:

- Freshness would be compromised if the food was left in its original packaging after opening.

ANY EXAMPLES?

- Bags of dry goods, whether plastic or paper (flours, sugars, pastas, dried beans, rice, popcorn, nuts, chocolate chips, crackers, pretzels, etc.). These can open when they shouldn't or can rip or spill, allowing the food to go stale quicker. You're better off transferring the contents into clear, airtight containers right off the bat.
- Individually wrapped items, like protein bars, packets of dried fruit, and envelopes of microwave popcorn. Dump them in a bin or basket so they're easy to grab. Save space by combining items in the same category in one bin.

ANY ADVICE ABOUT CONTAINERS?

- Choose containers with straight sides, not tapered ones, so they nestle together tightly.
- Pick a container large enough to store the contents of a whole package but not much more so you don't waste space.
- When possible, go for glass. It's hands-down better for the environment than plastic and doesn't stain or contain chemicals that could migrate onto food.

WHEN SHOULD I DECANT?

Ideally, do this as you're putting away groceries. Make sure to finish off whatever is left in the container—don't just add new on top of old.

OUR PICKS

STORAGE STALWARTS

It's no secret that we love glass jars. Pro organizers do too. Here's the latest and greatest on the jar front.

AMBER GLASS JARS

The classic now comes in dark glass that blocks 99% of UV light, which can impact flavor and nutrients over time. Amber Mason jars, $31 for six quart-size jars; *amazon.com*

MARKERS

Did you know you can write directly on a glass jar with a Sharpie? (It comes off with soap and water.) Same goes for a light-color liquid chalk marker on an amber glass jar. There goes one excuse for not labeling.

ILIDS

If you hate rusty metal lids, you'll love these airtight plastic tops for Mason jars, wide-mouthed and regular. They come in 17 colors—think of the color-combo possibilities. iLIDS, $15 for two; *amazon.com*

GOAL

CLEAN YOUR BATHROOM IN 15 MINUTES

A simple truth: Taking a quarter of an hour once a week to perform basic maintenance will save you from some really gross deep cleaning down the line. Remember 3-2-1: three tools, two cleaning products, one time a week.

WRITER **JOLIE KERR** ILLUSTRATIONS **EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM**

If you stick to a specific day to perform the following routine, it's likely to become a habit. You can skip the caddy of specialty cleansers and pare down your supplies to a foaming cleaner and a multipurpose cleaner with a few basic tools.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Foaming bathroom cleaner
- Multisurface cleaner
- Microfiber cloth
- Toilet brush
- Mop

THE ROUTINE

Minute 1

Spray the foaming bathroom cleaner on the big three—tub/shower, sink, and toilet. Be sure to get into corners and the seams around faucet hardware. For the toilet, hit the tank, bowl, and base. Spot-test the product on the underside of the toilet seat to ensure it's safe to use on that material; if it's not, use the multisurface cleaner there.

Minute 2

Let the foaming cleaner sit to cut through buildup and disinfect surfaces. Use the multisurface cleaner and the dry microfiber cloth to wipe the mirrors.

Minutes 3–8

Wet the cloth and wipe off the foaming cleaner from the sink faucet, ledge, and basin, then the tub/shower, rinsing the cloth with clean water as needed.

Minutes 9–11

Wipe the cleaner off the toilet tank, base, and seat with the rinsed microfiber cloth. Use the toilet brush to clean the bowl.

Minutes 12–15

Spray the multisurface cleaner on the floor or mop, then mop the floor.

THE CAVEAT

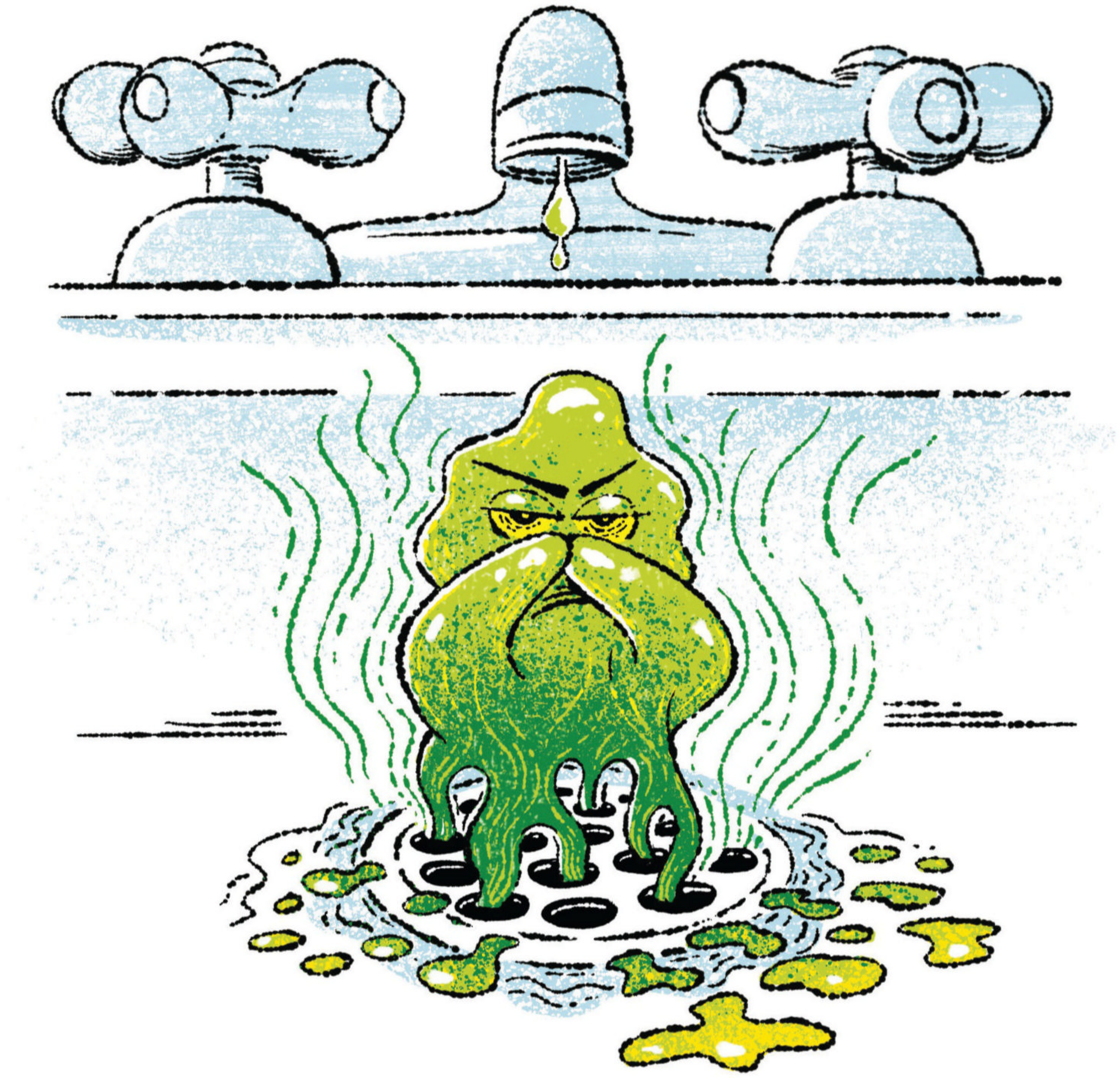
For specialty surfaces like marble, stick with specifically formulated cleaners.

OUR PICKS

DREAM *TEAM*

For the foaming cleaner, we like **Scrubbing Bubbles Bathroom Grime Fighter.** It's particularly tough on soap scum and can be counted on to kill lurking germs, viruses, and bacteria. **Windex Multisurface** also disinfects and leaves a streak-free finish on mirrors and shiny stuff.

Scrubbing Bubbles
BATHROOM GRIME FIGHTER
Windex
MULTISURFACE
KILLS 99.9% of GERMS



YUCK GUIDE

Clean common bathroom gross-outs with these troubleshooting solutions.

THE YUCK

Toothpaste splatters cemented in the sink

THE FIX

Casabella Microfiber Sponges

If your bathroom sink looks like Jackson Pollock started working with toothpaste, place a launderable microfiber sponge on the sink ledge for easy daily cleanup. Wash the sponge with your towels or cleaning rags once a week.

THE YUCK

Unpleasant odors

THE FIX

Bad Air Sponge

Let's face it: Sometimes the bathroom takes on a lingering odor. This sponge's canister-style odor absorber eliminates scent molecules.

THE YUCK

Persistent dampness

THE FIX

DampRid Moisture Absorber

A bathroom that just won't dry out due to a lack of ventilation will become a breeding ground for mold, mildew, and musty odors. DampRid, a dehumidifier that comes as a bag or tub of crystals, absorbs extra moisture straight from the air.

THE YUCK

Hair and product buildup on floors

THE FIX

iRobot Braava Jet Robot Mop

iRobot's compact mopping robot offers a variety of mopping and sweeping options. The damp sweeping pads are perfect for picking up hair as well as eliminating residue from dry shampoo and hair spray, which attract dirt.

THE YUCK

Hair clogs in drains

THE FIX

TubShroom Ultra

If you avoid cleaning hair out of the shower drain, know you're not alone—no one enjoys this icky job. The TubShroom hair catcher fits just inside the drain opening and captures every last strand before they mat and clog the drain. Just pull out the Shroom and wipe the hair away. (We found it's easier to clean the Shroom when wet, so tackle this after each shower—ideally when you're still sans glasses.)

THE YUCK

Tub rings

THE FIX

OxiClean Versatile Stain Remover

Dirt and product residue can leave behind a scum ring in the tub. A quick fix is to fill the tub with very hot water and add a scoop of OxiClean Versatile Stain Remover. Wait 15 minutes for the solution to dissolve buildup, then drain and wipe the tub clean. Bonus: The hot water and OxiClean combo should also help relieve buildup causing a slow-moving drain.

THE YUCK

Mold and mildew on grout

THE FIX

X-14 Mildew Stain Remover

For tough mold and mildew, you may need this heavy hitter. Spray it on and let the cleaner penetrate the mold or mildew; rinse clean with water. *But remember*: X-14 must be used in a well-ventilated area and should never mix with other cleaners. If you want an eco-friendly option, you can get the job done with distilled vinegar, a scrub brush, and some serious elbow grease.

THE YUCK

Cloudy, spotted shower glass

THE FIX

Dryer sheets

It's weird but true: Nothing will get a cloudy, spotted glass shower door cleaner than a dryer sheet. Wet the glass, ball the sheet up, and scrub the door with it in a circular motion. Wipe the glass clean with a microfiber cloth to remove soap scum and any residue from the dryer sheet.

OUR PICK

GO FOR *TWO*

Guess what? Your bathroom needs a recycling bin too. An easy solution: Buy two identical cans—one for trash, one for recyclables (label if needed).

BHG Collection 1.3 Gallon Round Stainless Steel Step Trash Can, $15; *walmart.com*

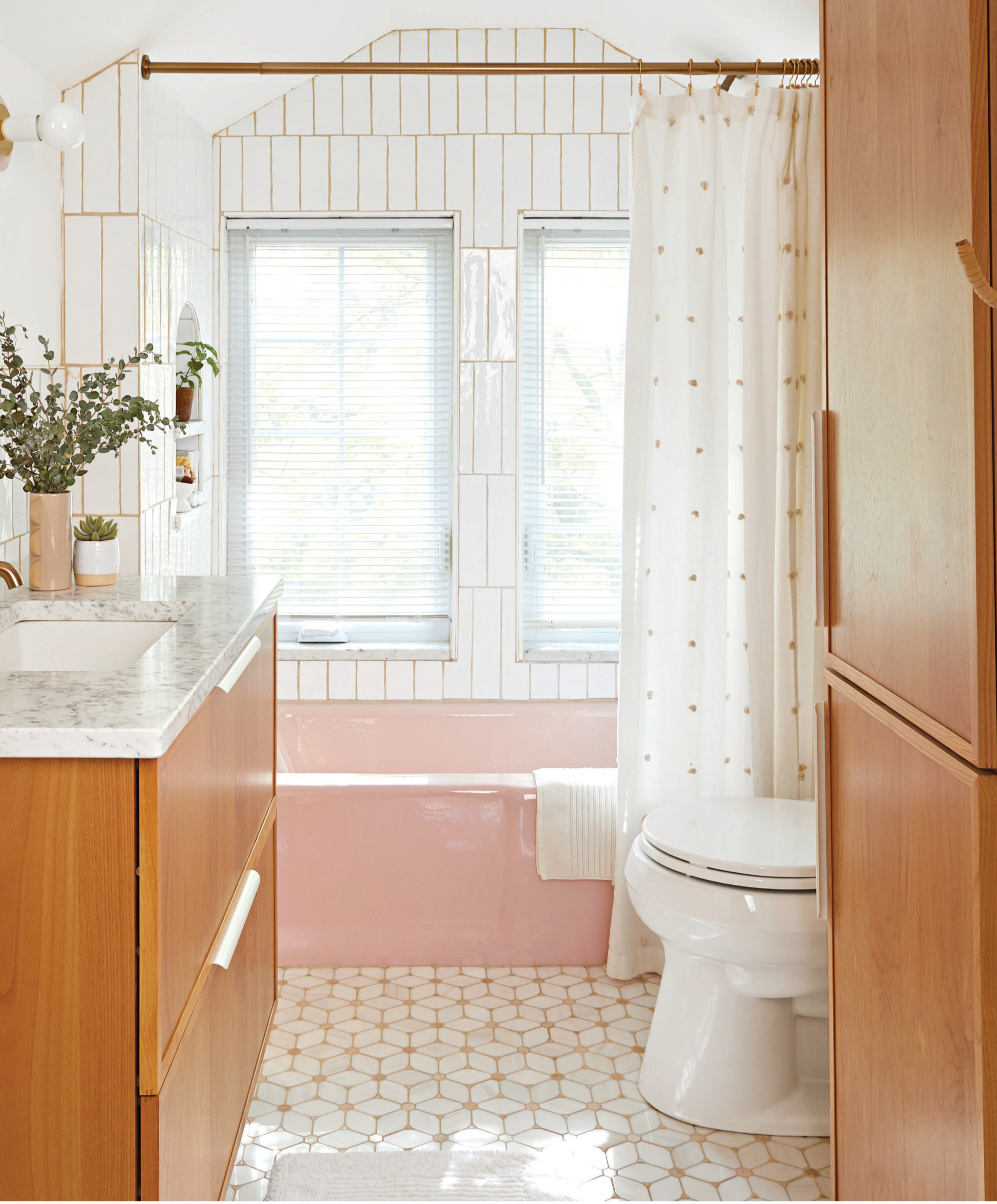
Stripped down to just the pink tub, a designer used the blank slate in her home's only bathroom to get all the design and storage elements she desired.

VINTAGE *revamp*

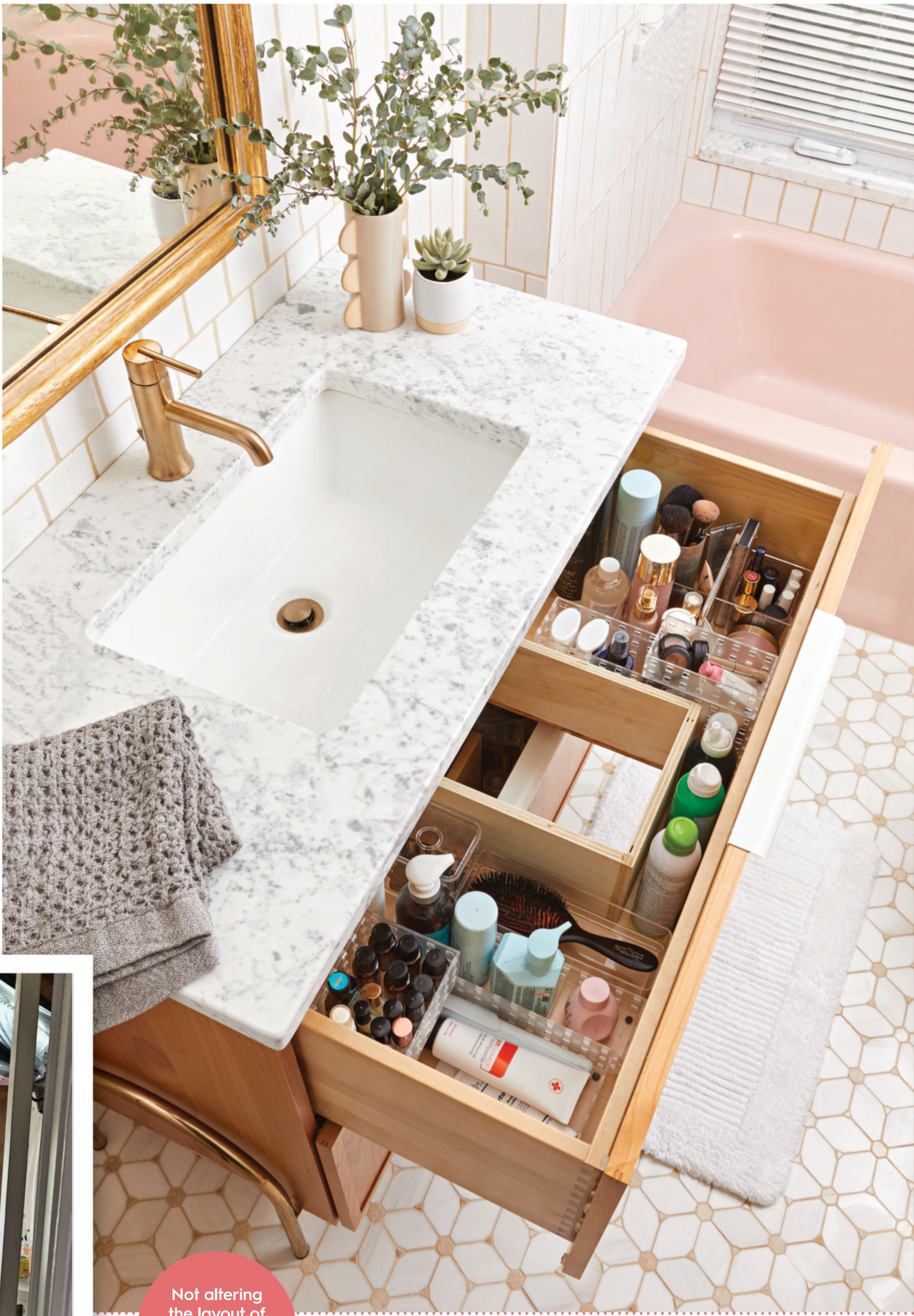
WRITER **LAURA FENTON** STYLIST **LESLIE POYZER** PHOTOGRAPHER **MARTY BALDWIN**

WITH A BACKGROUND IN INTERIOR DESIGN AND A FATHER WHO'S A BUILDER, designer Leslie Poyzer was uniquely suited to take on an 1890s house in need of a major renovation. The only full bathroom in the Des Moines home had already been gutted when she bought the place, but the pink cast-iron bathtub remained. Leslie opted to keep it, using it to inform and shape her design plan. "It was in good condition and, if I took it out, I knew I couldn't get the same quality in there," she says.

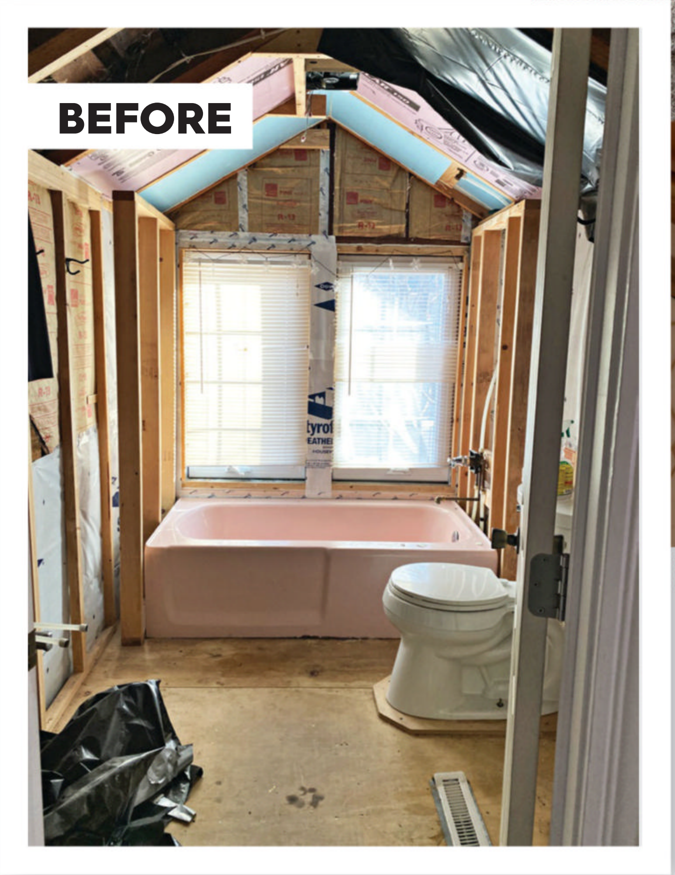
It was the first of many style-meets-cost-saving strategies Leslie and her dad employed. She searched the internet high and low to find the floor tile on sale, used a wall tile stocked by Lowe's, and installed the same marble slab from her kitchen remodel on the vanity countertop. When issues arose, like needing to replumb the space to fit code, her prior cost-saving strategies helped stay within the overall budget. In the end, her modern style choices give a retro nod that honors the old house—and that blush-color tub.



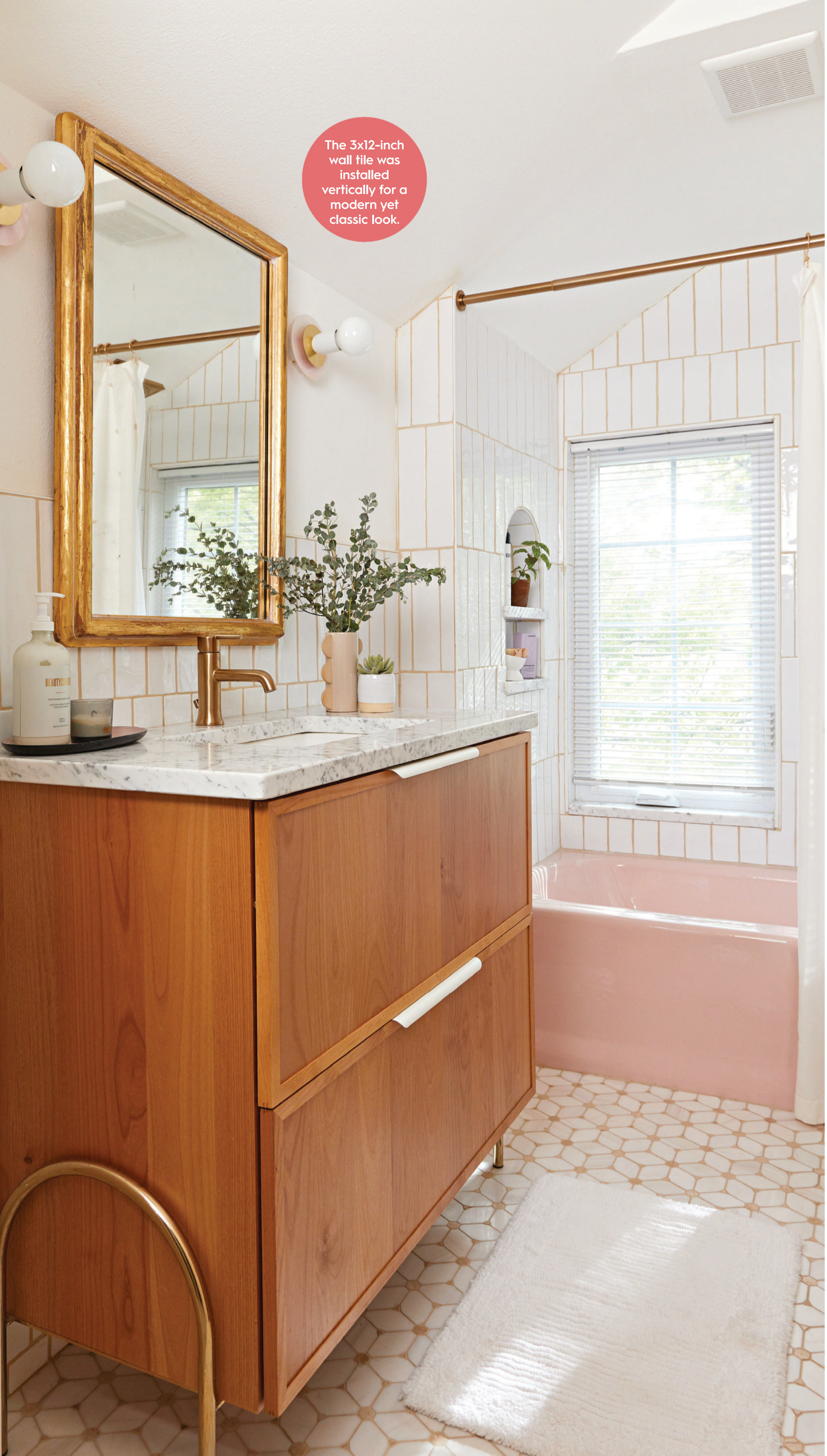
BRIGHT POSSIBILITIES Creamy whites, brushed brass, and rosy woods bolster the soft pink bathtub without overtly repeating the signature hue, *above*. To tie together different tile patterns on the walls and floor, homeowner and stylist Leslie Poyzer went with beige grout for both. “It reads nearly pink next to the tub,” she says. **CUSTOM-ISH NOOK** To create the stylish, arched inset in the shower, *opposite*, Leslie installed prefabricated EZ-Niches *(alpinebay.com)* between the studs.



SMART DESIGN
Leslie maximized the small room's storage with a large but simply shaped cabinet, *right* (Jax in Alder, *omegacabinetry.com*). She keeps the generously deep drawers organized with movable, stackable clear baskets from The Container Store.



Not altering the layout of the bathroom saved on costs and workload.



The 3x12-inch wall tile was installed vertically for a modern yet classic look.

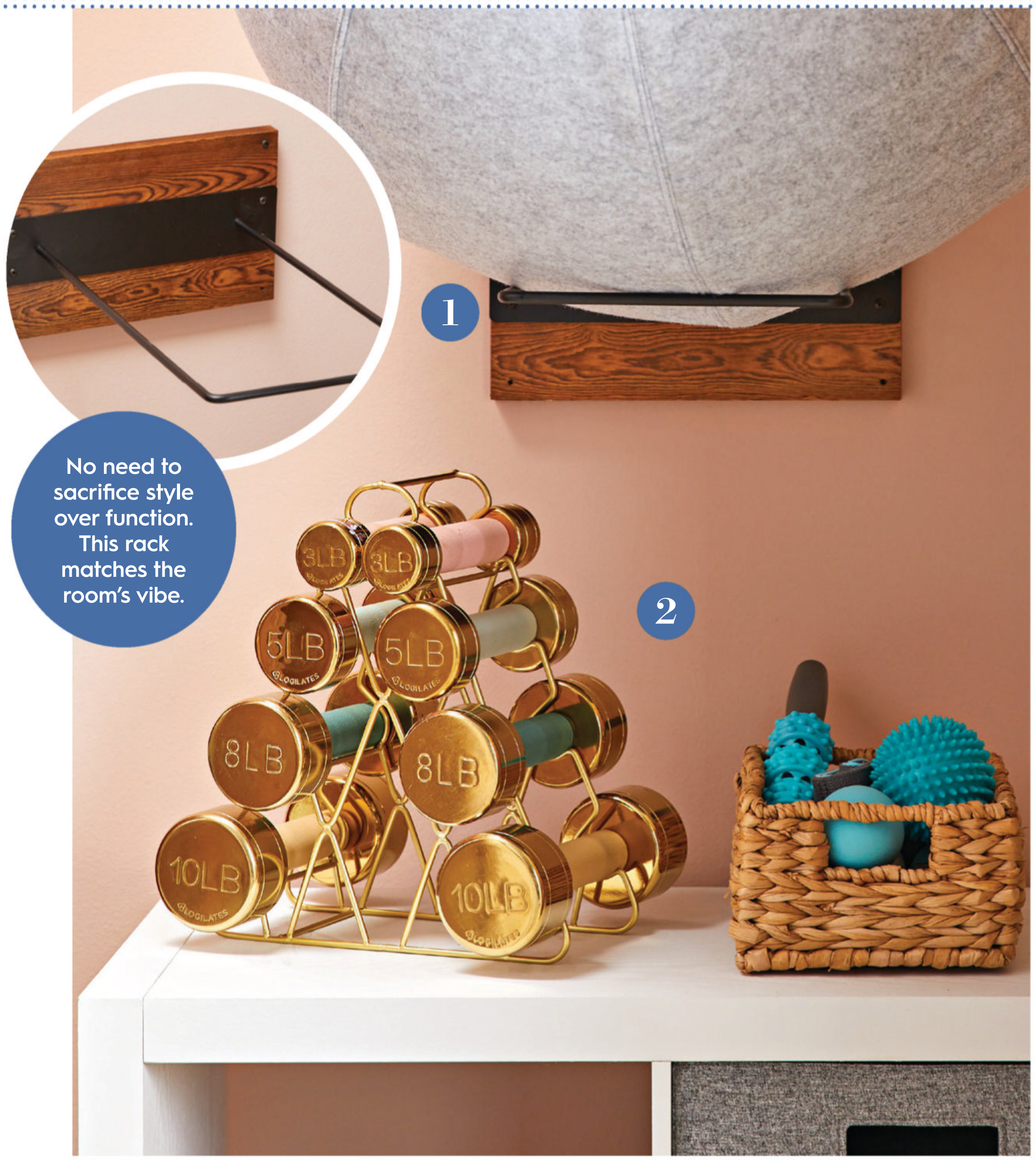
METAL WORKS

The matching metal finishes add a sense of cohesion to the small bathroom. Brushed brass picks up the warmth of the beige grout lines and brings vintage style to some of the more modern shapes like the sconces, *left* (Aureole Colour Series Wall Sconce by SparkandBell, *etsy.com*). On the vanity cabinet, Leslie added a pair of arched metal legs (Hedvig, *prettypegs.com*) and Billsbro pulls from IKEA.

worked-out CLOSET

A small closet flexes its muscles with ample storage to fit both everyday clothes and at-home workout accessories.

WRITER **ASHLYN WARE** PHOTOGRAPHER **MARTY BALDWIN** PRODUCER **LESLIE POYZER**



No need to sacrifice style over function. This rack matches the room's vibe.

THE CONVENIENCE OF AN IN-HOME GYM IS UNDENIABLE—BUT WHERE DO YOU STORE ALL THAT GEAR? To keep equipment out of sight without compromising clothing space, we worked with designer Leslie Poyzer to outfit a small walk-in closet with storage furniture and hanging organization. First, we freed up floor space with a cubby unit (Better Homes & Gardens 4-Cube Storage Organizer, $49; *walmart.com*). Then we rearranged, moving pants, T-shirts, and other folded clothes into a dresser and swapping a wall-to-wall clothing rod with a half-length one for dresses and skirts. Lastly, the back of the door provided a spot for mats, straps, and Pilates gear. Workout—ready!

1 ON THE WALL

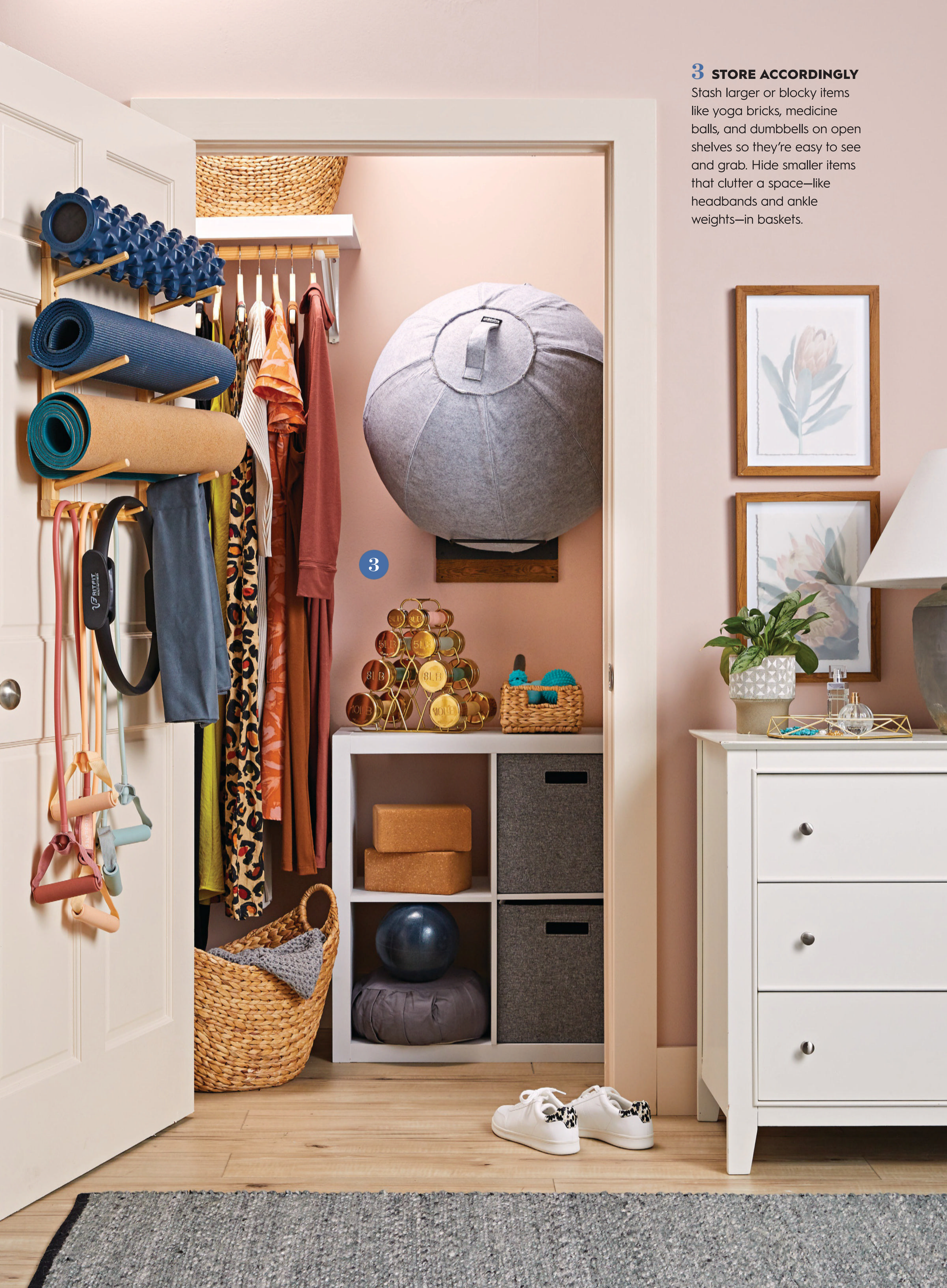
Give every item in your workout routine a home. A U-shape bracket provides a spot up and off the floor to rest a bulky yet lightweight yoga ball (MyGift Exercise Ball Equipment Organizer, $37; *amazon.com*).

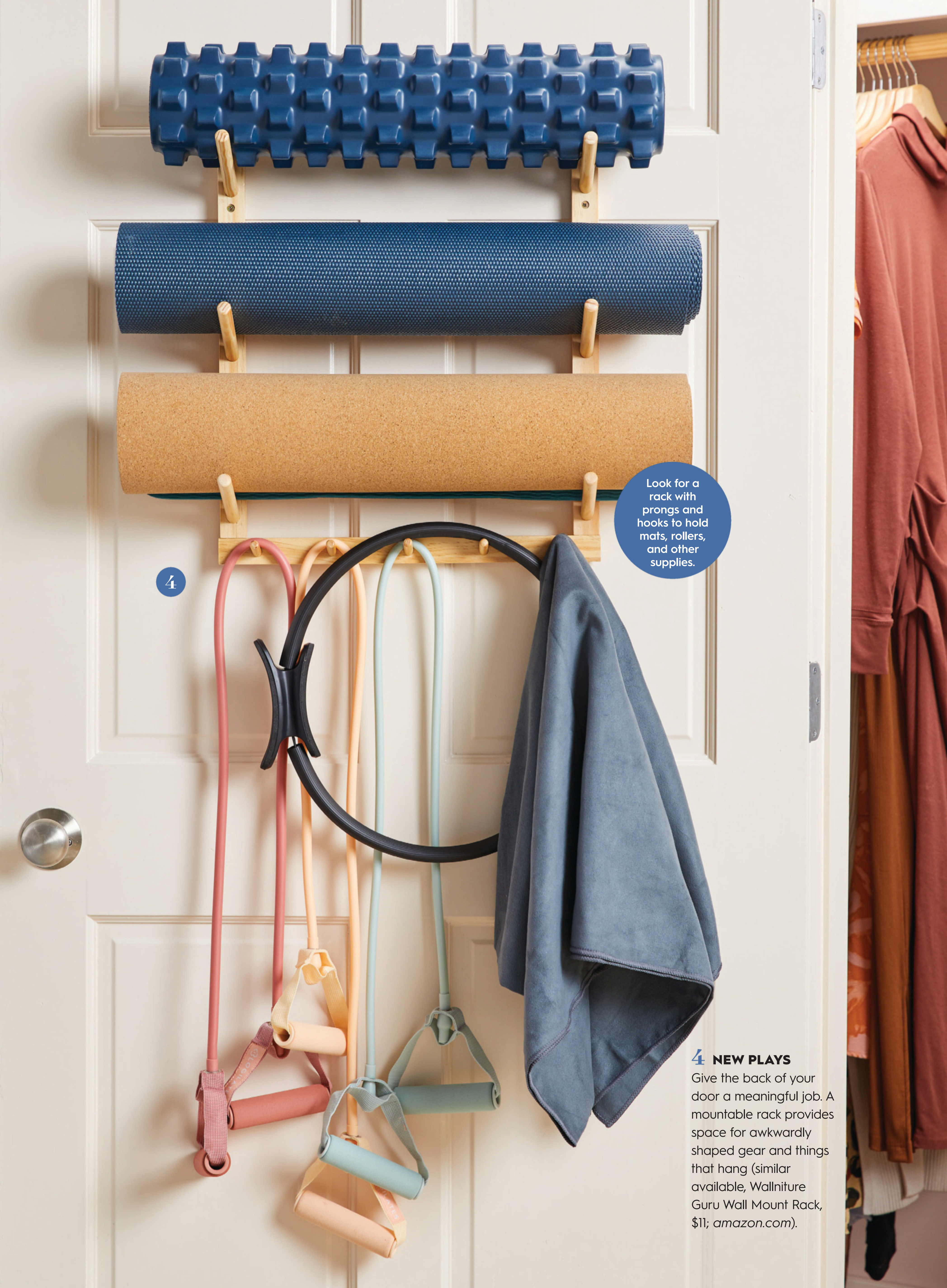
2 CLEAN ROUTINE

Both pretty and practical, a weight rack (Blogilates 4 Tier Weight Rack, $30; *target.com*) makes post-workout cleanup a breeze. Corral small muscle rollers, massagers, and anything that rolls in a basket or bin.

3 STORE ACCORDINGLY

Stash larger or blocky items like yoga bricks, medicine balls, and dumbbells on open shelves so they're easy to see and grab. Hide smaller items that clutter a space—like headbands and ankle weights—in baskets.





Look for a rack with prongs and hooks to hold mats, rollers, and other supplies.

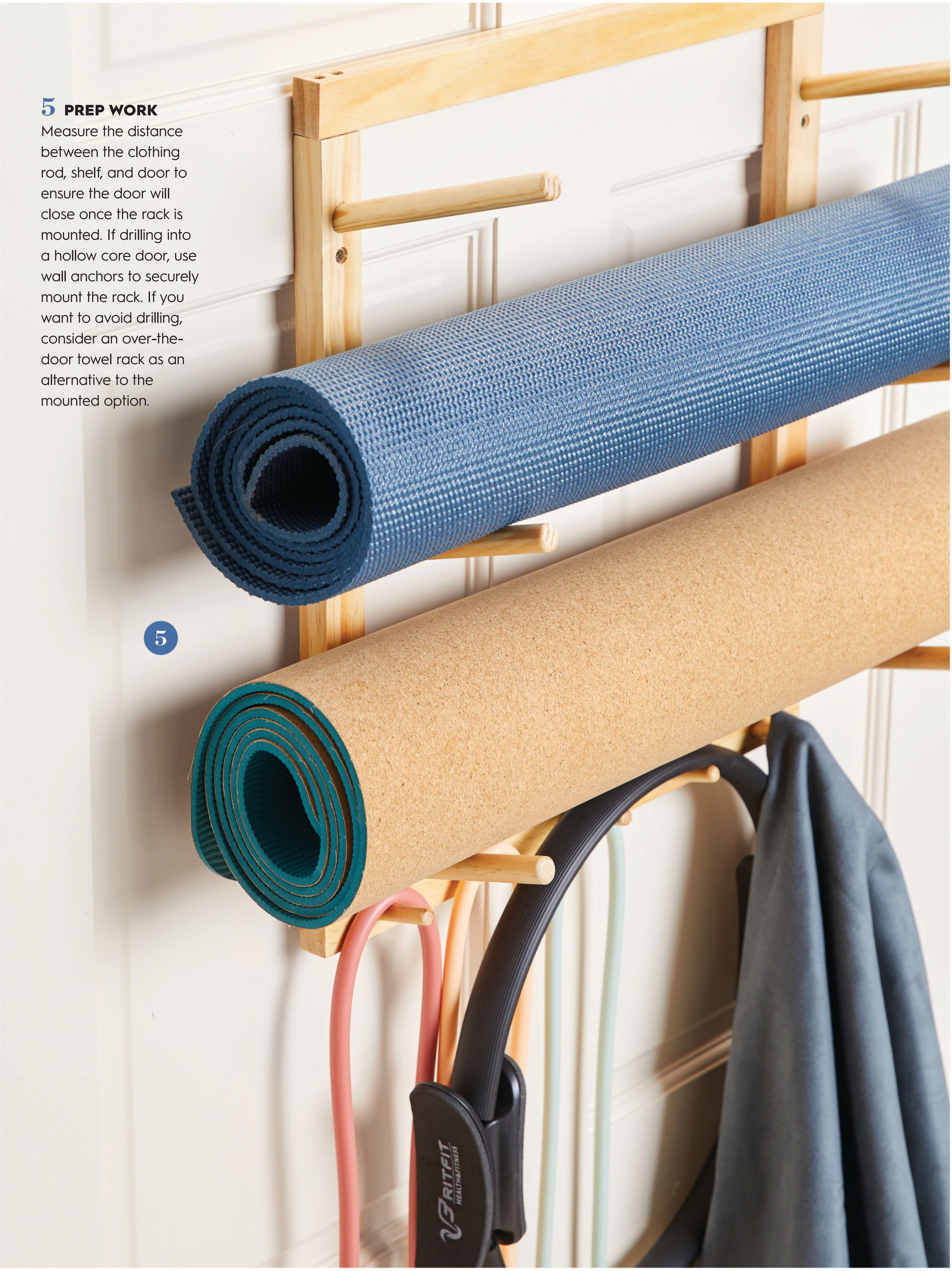
4

4 NEW PLAYS

Give the back of your door a meaningful job. A mountable rack provides space for awkwardly shaped gear and things that hang (similar available, Wallniture Guru Wall Mount Rack, $11; *amazon.com*).

5 PREP WORK

Measure the distance between the clothing rod, shelf, and door to ensure the door will close once the rack is mounted. If drilling into a hollow core door, use wall anchors to securely mount the rack. If you want to avoid drilling, consider an over-the-door towel rack as an alternative to the mounted option.



ROCKVILLE PIKE
NORMAN MAILER
I KNOW THIS MUCH IS TRUE
WALLY LAMB

Add blackout liners to existing curtains. They'll block light and help insulate a room without sacrificing style.

REST *easy*

A well-designed, organized bedroom provides the ultimate formula for comfort and relaxation. Sleep soundly by implementing these simple yet effective elements.

WRITERS **KATY KIICK CONDON & JOLIE KERR**

SO YOU WANT A CALMING BEDROOM RETREAT, ONE THAT'S WARM, TRANQUIL, COMFY, OR ZEN? Although there's no one-size-fits-all solution where style is involved, there are designer-approved strategies you can use to fashion a calm space that suits your personality and lulls you into a serene state of mind. For this bedroom, *opposite*, designer Mona Ross Berman shows off one design fundamental: a plush, warming rug beneath the bed. Read on for more dream-inducing ideas.

LAYOUT BASICS Incorporate a few principles from the Chinese philosophy feng shui to help you build a harmonious base. Start with your bed: It should be in the "command position" with a wall or sturdy headboard behind it, space to climb in on either side, and a view of the door (without facing it directly). Establish a sense of balance with symmetrical pairs of items like nightstands, lights, and pillow sets.

PHOTOGRAPHER: LAURA MOSS

SPACE PLANNING

1 TOO SMALL

"Small living means utilizing vertical space," says designer (and therapist) Anita Yokota. Her go-to solutions are installing good-looking, catchall wall hooks and freeing up surfaces by hanging plants and lights from the ceiling. Pick furniture that does double duty, like a headboard with shelves or underbed drawers. Nightstands can be an opportunity for extra storage: Choose pieces with height, such as a bookshelf. Or, if you're also working in the bedroom, designer Emilie Munroe says, "Swap in a petite desk on one side of the bed. It's chic and functional."

2 TOO BIG

Think in zones. "Figure out the bed first, then how you want to experience the rest of the space," says designer Linda Hayslett. And don't limit yourself to seating areas. Create an office, workout corner, or crafts space. "It comes down to your goals and lifestyle. Design for that," Yokota says. Each zone should be an island with its own accessories like rugs and lights. "Otherwise they'll feel like an afterthought," Munroe says.

3 WINDOWS

If the best spot for your bed is on a wall with windows, like designer Beth Barden's room, *right*, add "architecture" behind it with columns of curtains and a cushioned headboard, which will help you feel protected yet still let in natural light from above.

ADD ONE TOOL

Swap in a sectioned hamper and skip the sorting step later. Two compartments are good, but three are better for dividing whites, darks, and towels.

smart strategy

NIGHT TABLE

Use your nightstand to create a routine that encourages your brain to switch to sleep mode. The must-haves:

DRAWER "Part of the bedtime routine is putting your devices in a drawer and saying goodbye for the night," designer Yokota says. Many nightstands now have built-in outlets or charger openings.

LAMP Swap in a programmable smart lightbulb. You can choose cool light in the morning to wake you up and warm, dim light at night to calm you down.

SMALL TRAY Corral jewelry, glasses, and lip balm in one spot.

ALARM Your phone is in the drawer, remember? Any clock will do, but if you have trouble falling asleep or waking up, consider trying the Hatch Restore 2. You can build a bedtime and wake-up routine with timed meditation, light cues (including a sunrise), and a sound machine. $170; *hatch.co*

COASTER Your nighttime water glass deserves a place too. Plus, seeing the coaster will cue you to place a glass there—no more midnight kitchen runs!

SPACE Set your books or journal in the remaining open area.

A CLEANING *TRUISM*

A made bed instantly helps your bedroom look tidier. Try to establish a habit with a month of daily bed-making. If the job takes more than a minute, consider paring down the throw blankets and pillows. Those decorative items aren't especially decorative while sitting on the floor.

ONE LINE A DAY

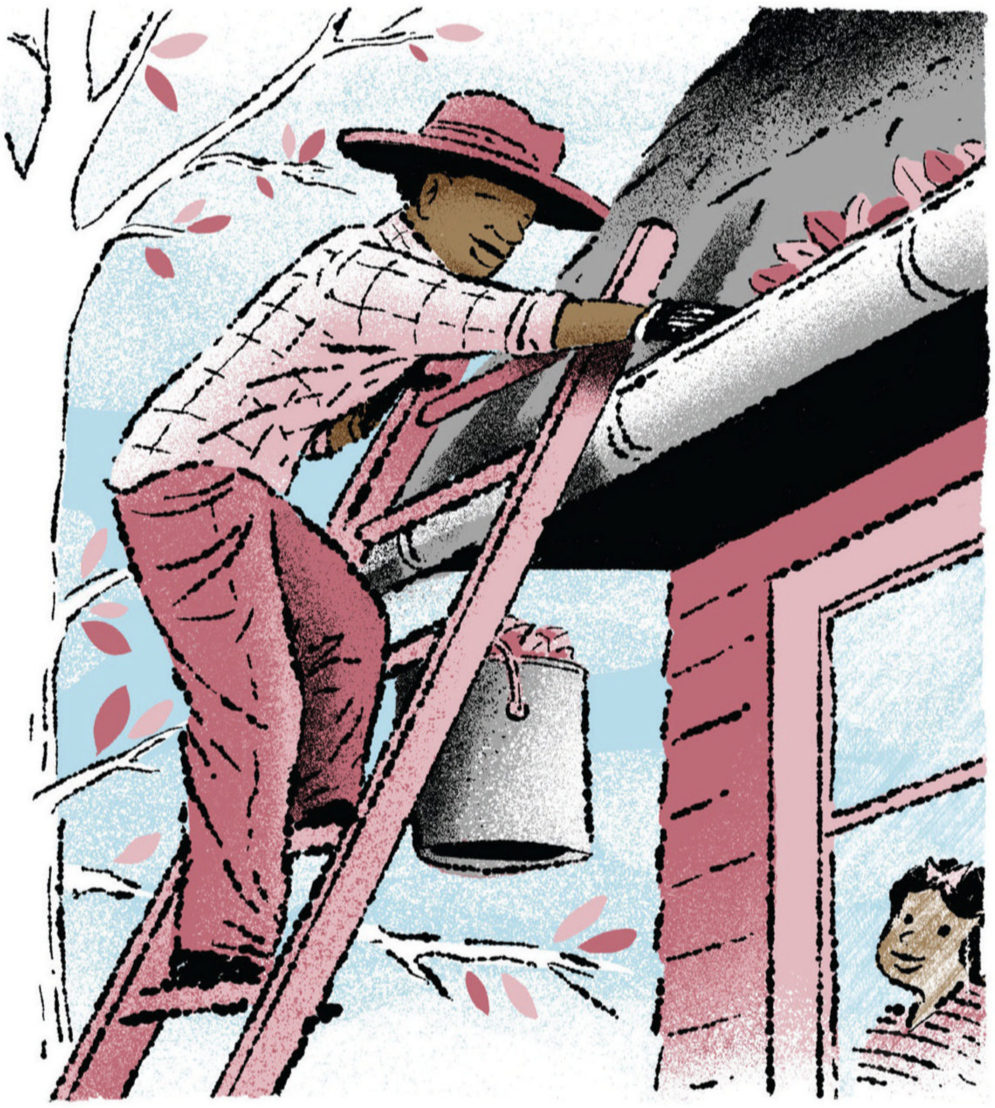
PHOTOGRAPHER: BRIE WILLIAMS

GOAL

KEEP YOUR HOME HUMMING

Deep cleaning the hardworking—often hidden—parts of your house can be a yucky, often thankless task, but your grit will pay off in long-lasting, efficient appliances.

ILLUSTRATIONS **EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM**



GUTTERS

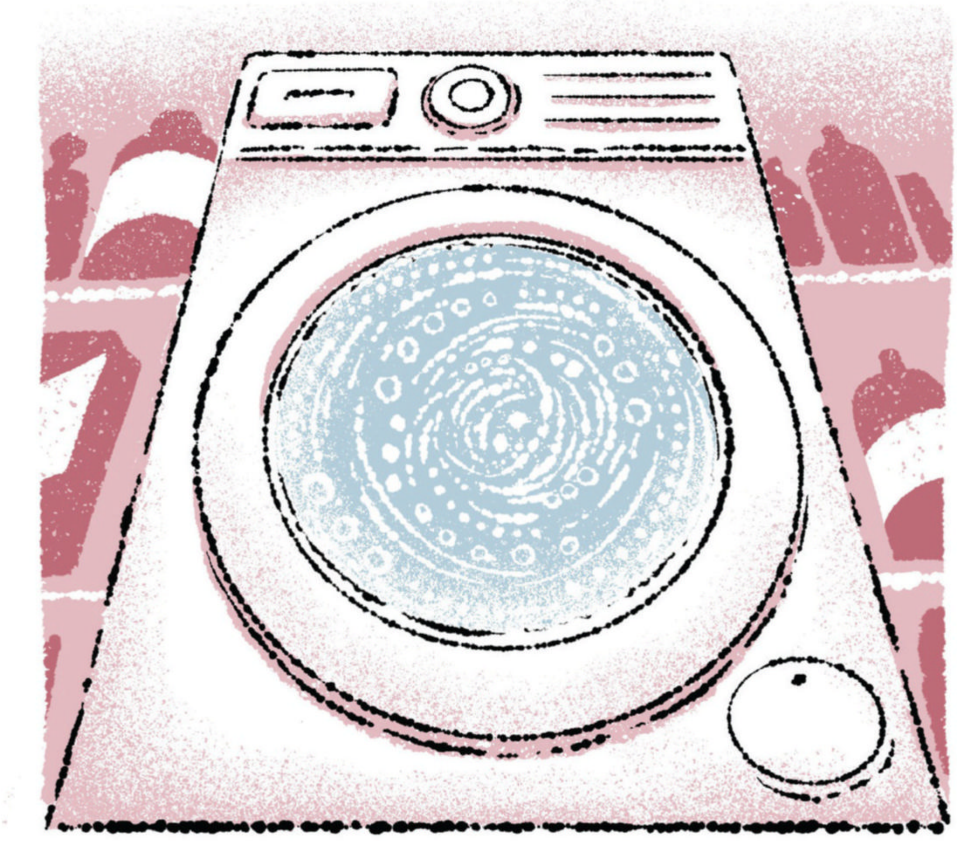
Clearing out gutters is a spring and fall job, but if you can't remember the last time you did it and you don't mind being on a ladder this time of year, do it now. Clogs can cause ice dams that damage your gutters and roof. Worse, when ice melts and doesn't drain, it finds a way indoors. (Hello, wet ceilings.)

WHEN TO CLEAN

Twice a year.

WHAT TO DO

Put on work gloves and set up a ladder. Scoop out the leaves, twigs, and other junk with your hands and a trowel. Drop waste in a bucket attached to the ladder or onto a drop cloth on the ground below. Check for downspout clogs. Starting at the end farthest from the downspout, flush the gutter using a hose with a sprayer. If the water doesn't rush out below, spray up the downspout or remove the downspout and flush it out.



WASHER FILTER

Does your washing machine have a lint filter or a drain pump filter? You'll find the answer in—you guessed it—the owner's manual. (If the filter is self-cleaning, you're off the hook for this task.)

WHEN TO CLEAN

Once a month.

WHAT TO DO

On a top-loading machine, you'll likely find the lint filter inside the drum or on the back. Most lint filters can be removed and rinsed under hot water. A front-loader's drain pump filter and hose are typically on the front. (Look for a little door.) Put a towel under a shallow pan on the floor, then remove the hose plug and let the water flow into the pan. If you haven't done this for a while (or ever), expect as much as a quart of smelly water along with some crud. Then slowly unscrew the drain pump filter (water might flow or dribble out) and pull it out. You'll probably find some slimy stuff; you might find loose items from pockets. Dump out the filter and wash it with water and a toothbrush.

DRYER DUCT

Thumbs up if you clean the lint trap before drying every load of laundry. You should also deal with lint buildup in the dryer duct; it's an energy suck and a fire hazard.

WHEN TO CLEAN

At least once a year.

WHAT TO DO

Pull the dryer away from the wall and unplug it. (If it's a gas model, shut off the gas.) Disconnect the duct from the dryer and the wall, then loosen the lint inside with a long-handled brush or drill-powered cleaning kit designed for dryer ducts. Using a vacuum with a crevice tool attachment, suck up the lint on the floor and from the holes in the dryer and the wall. Brush and vacuum the vent outdoors too.

GOOD TO KNOW

Cut down on future fuzz by installing a rigid metal duct, which won't trap lint the way flexible ducts can, and routing the duct directly from the dryer to outside.

WRITERS: KATY KIICK CONDON, BERIT THORKELSON, KIT SELZER

MORE NOOKS AND CRANNIES THAT NEED YOUR ATTENTION

6

SURFACES YOU'RE FORGETTING TO CLEAN

FRIDGE TOP

SKYLIGHTS & DECORATIVE WINDOWS (ESPECIALLY THE MULLIONS)

TRIM ABOVE DOORWAYS

VENTS

BOOKCASE SHELVES

PICTURE FRAMES (ADD PUTTY TO FRAME BACKS SO DUSTING DOESN'T MEAN REALIGNING)

INEXTRICABLY DIRTY

LIGHTS

How do bugs get in there, anyway?

GLASS FIXTURES

Feather dust often, and periodically run fixture covers through the dishwasher.

Dirty to the eye? Michael Dimopoulos, owner of Lazy Susans Cleaning, uses a 1:2 ratio of white vinegar and water. Spray on, then wipe off using a microfiber cloth. (Let lights cool first—a wet rag could make a hot bulb explode.)

CEILING FANS

Dust-bunny fur builds up on blades. Try the Good Grips Microfiber Extendable Duster by OXO, $18; *containerstore.com*.

Substantial dust? Slip a pillowcase onto a blade, then pull the case across the blade so it catches all the dust.

DESERVEDLY UBIQUITOUS

MICROFIBER

Most microfiber cloths are all-purpose and, alone or with water or a cleaner, can tackle the dust and buildup on most any surface. Stock your cleaning bucket with one just for glass (use with window cleaner or a vinegar solution) and one for electronics (use it dry). Then add a wearable version, *below*.

OUR PICK

HANDY HELPER

MICROFIBER FINGERS DUSTING AND CLEANING MITT

Inch-long "fingers" on one side trap dust and allergens—especially good for large neglected areas like the space behind the TV. Libman, $7; *homedepot.com*

3 NON-LAUNDRY PLACES TO DEPLOY DRYER SHEETS

LAMPSHADES

BLINDS

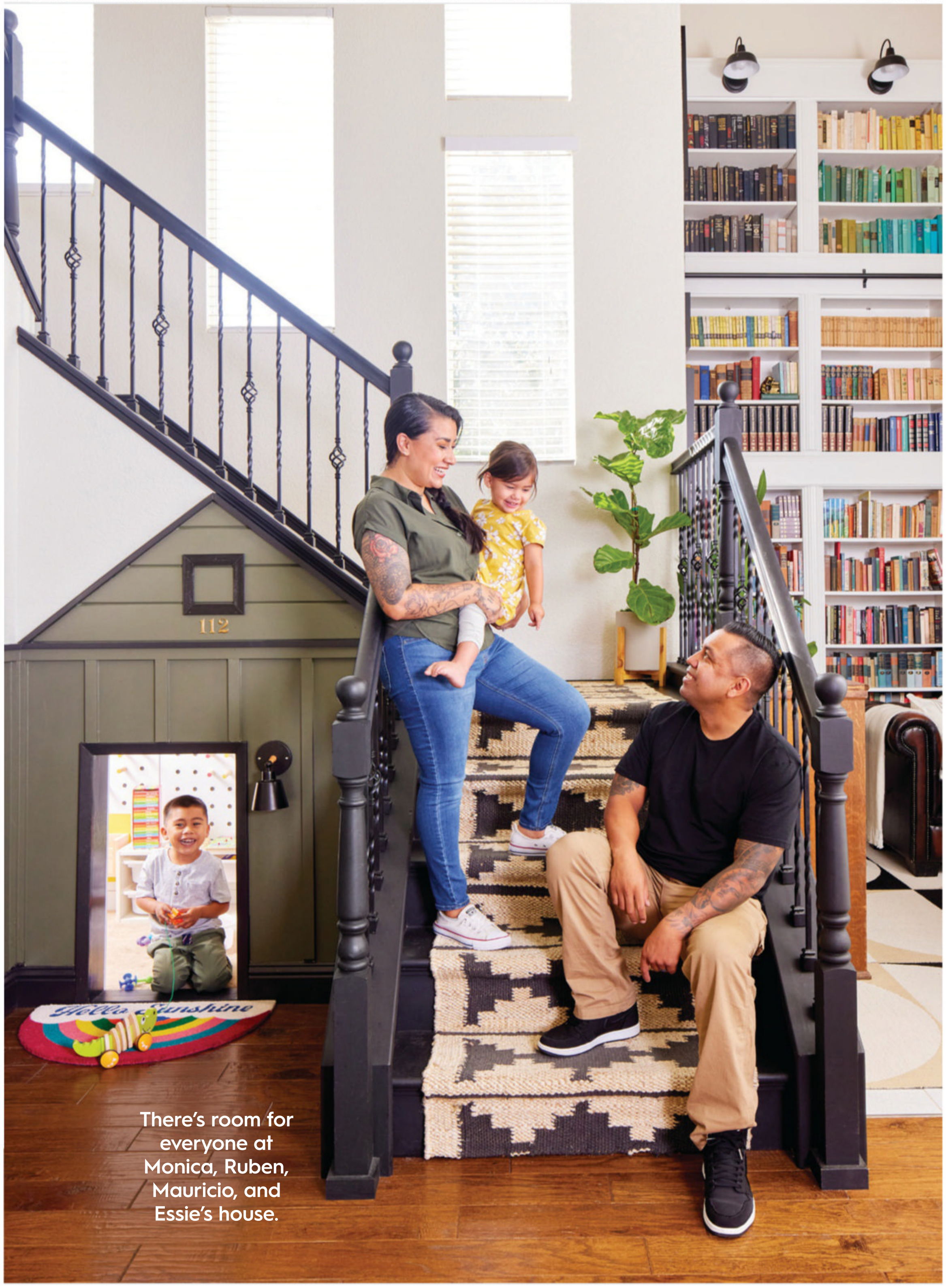
AROUND PLANTS

> "They pull away dust and prevent static cling, meaning less dust in the future."
>
> —MICHAEL DIMOPOULOS, OWNER OF LAZY SUSANS CLEANING

family *function*

A determined homeowner had visions of a space that better fit her young family's needs. With some elbow grease and know-how, she created a home that's pretty, practical, and tailor-made.

WRITER & STYLIST **LACEY HOWARD** PHOTOGRAPHER **ADAM ALBRIGHT**



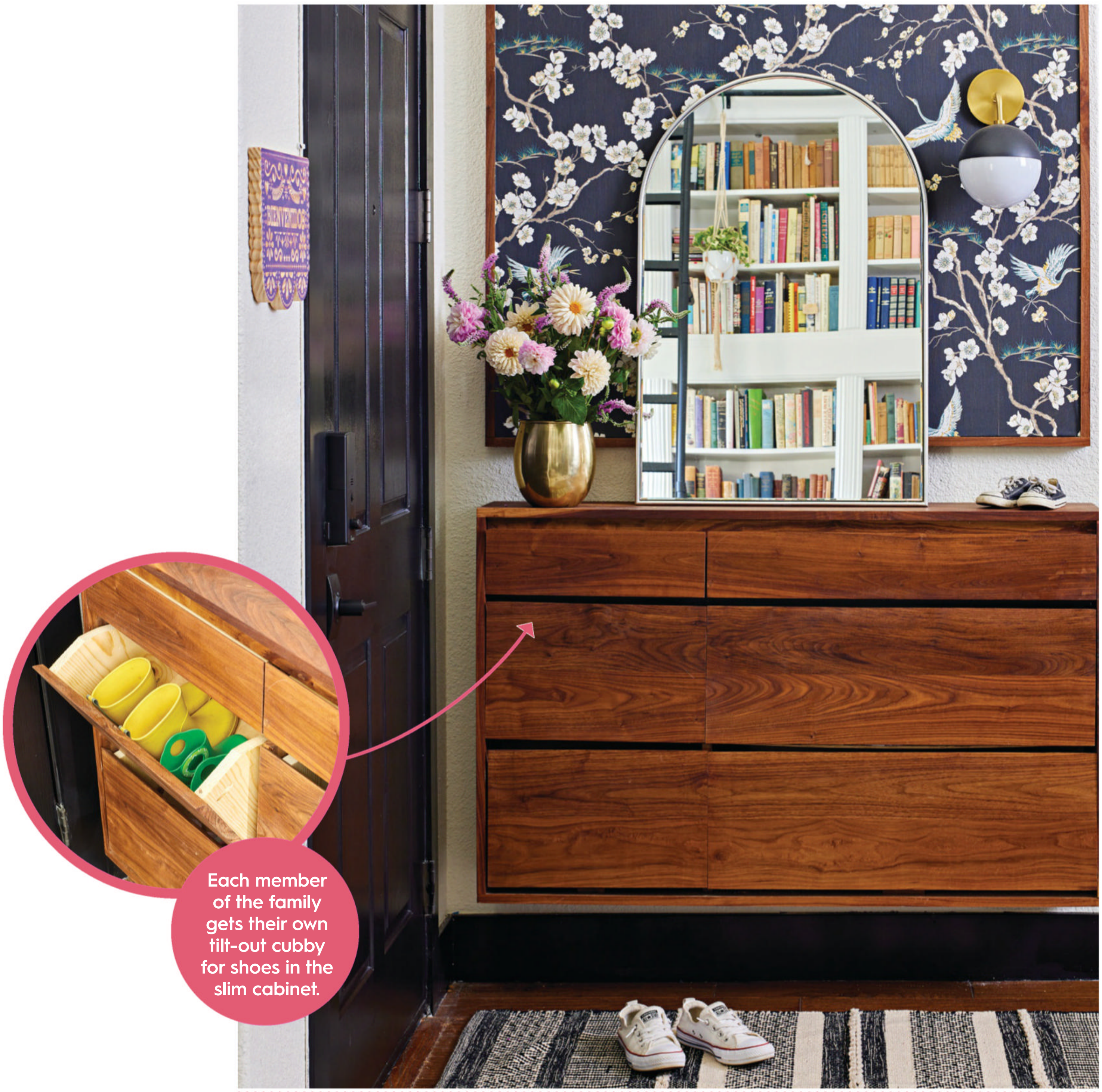
There's room for everyone at Monica, Ruben, Mauricio, and Essie's house.

WHEN MONICA CHAVEZ AND HER FAMILY MOVED INTO THEIR 2000s BUILDER-GRADE HOME, SHE KNEW SHE WANTED TO MAKE OVER ALMOST EVERY ROOM—EVENTUALLY. "My goal was to create ultrafunctional features that would make our daily lives better and add beauty as well," says the San Francisco Bay-area homeowner. "But with small children and pets, my house has to be more than just pretty—it has to be durable, flexible, and grow with us through various phases of our life."

With limited time and budget, Monica says she carefully observed how her growing family used each space, brainstormed solutions, and then got as creative as she could to execute her ideas inexpensively.

Monica has used her home as her personal classroom for countless creative DIY projects, learning to use various tools and flex her interior design talents—all while documenting the metamorphosis on her blog,

MOODY MAKEOVER
Monica overhauled her builder-grade stairs by painting them black and adding a stair runner, *left*. "Bring in color that you love, no matter what it is," says Monica, who shares home and garden DIY projects on Instagram (@house.of.esperanza). "It is your home, your sanctuary—surround yourself with that joy."



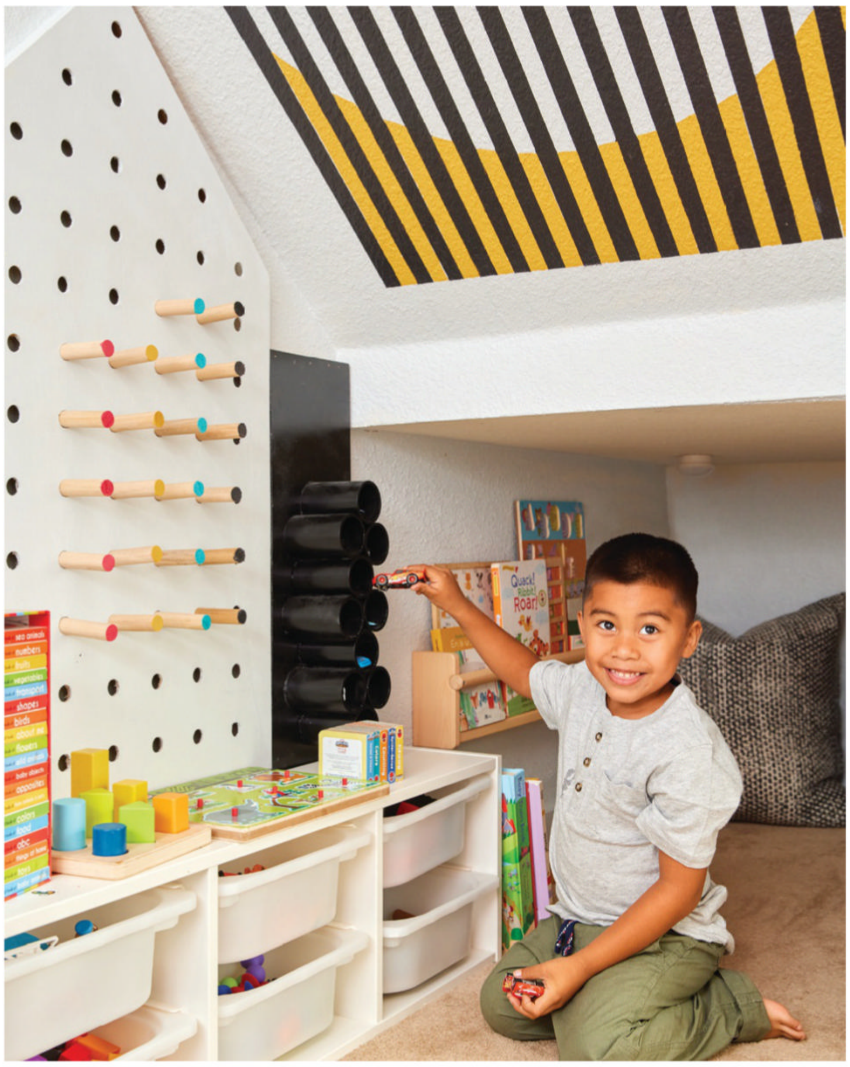
Each member of the family gets their own tilt-out cubby for shoes in the slim cabinet.

WELCOME HOME

“The shoe storage cabinet was much needed for our family of four,” Monica says. “I had about 10 inches of space behind the front door to work with, and I wanted to utilize its full potential.” Since she couldn’t find the exact size and style she preferred, she designed and built this cabinet herself, *left*. A 5×3-foot piece of wallpaper adhered on plywood and trimmed in matching wood defines the space and creates a removable art piece.

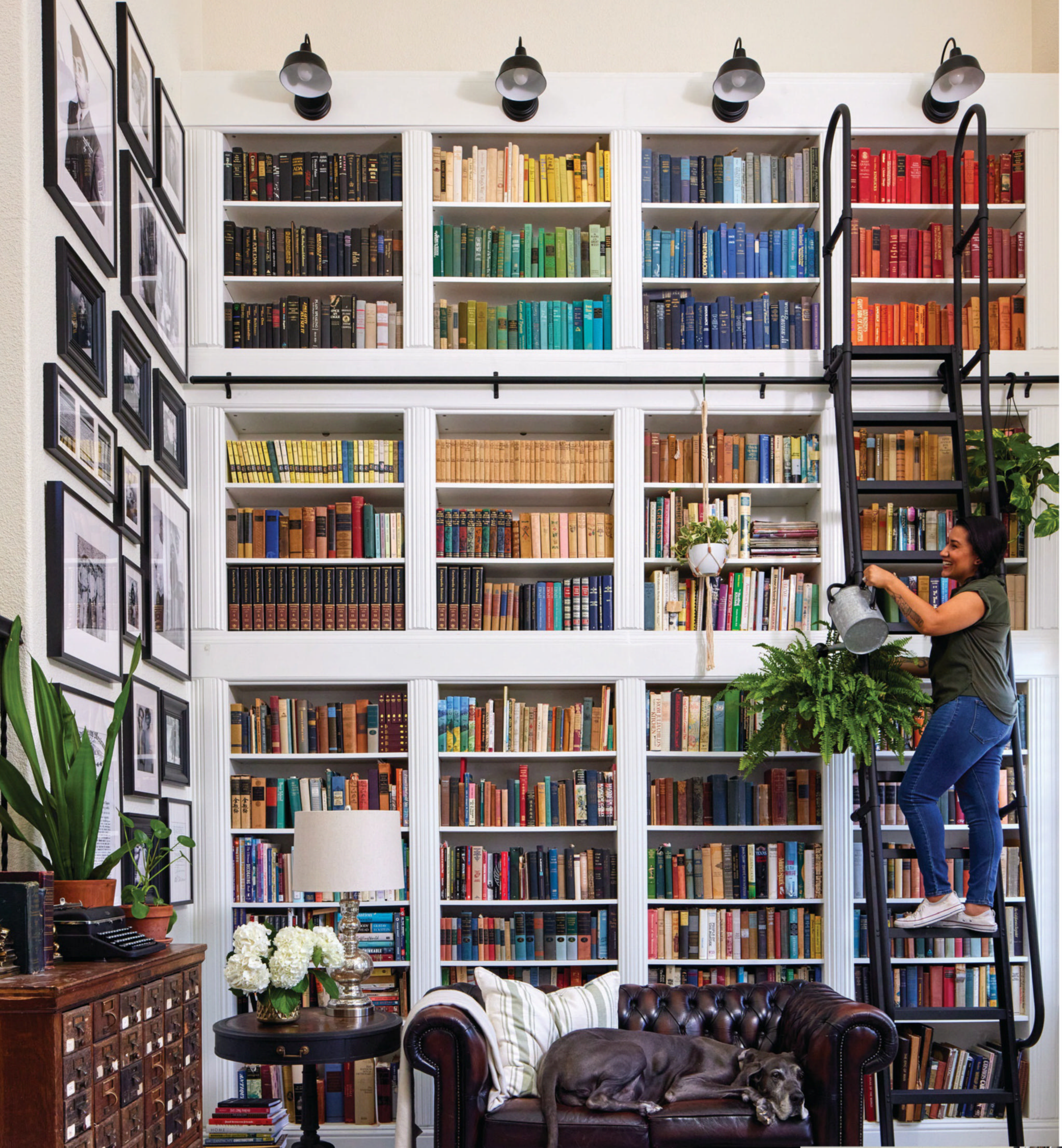
House of Esperanza. She has brought her visions to life in the family’s living spaces, bedrooms, backyard, and beyond. And in every space she’s added storage, organization, personality, and a touch of her favorite hue: black. “It’s a little disruptive when used in interiors, but what most people underestimate is how black can elevate a space, especially small spaces,” she says.

Monica’s many changes have not only leveled up her home’s style, but also created a bespoke fit for her family—a cabinet to corral shoes at the front door, a table for crafting with her young children, and a miniature clubhouse where they play. “My house is messy and has toys strewn about, but it also has the scent of a home-cooked meal and the feeling of love we have for one another,” Monica says. “My favorite thing is that we *really live* here.”



CRAWL SPACE

A deep but awkward nook under the stairs became a dumping ground for luggage and holiday bins. “Things would go in there to go away,” says Monica, who felt inspired to transform it into a playroom, *left*. The pint-size entrance got a backyard clubhouse redesign. Inside, the nook boasts a reading spot, bins, pegboard, and a board with cut PVC pipes for toy cars. Monica painted graphic stripes and bright blocks on the walls for visual excitement. “It’s a safe, kid-friendly place just for them that offers room to grow,” she says.

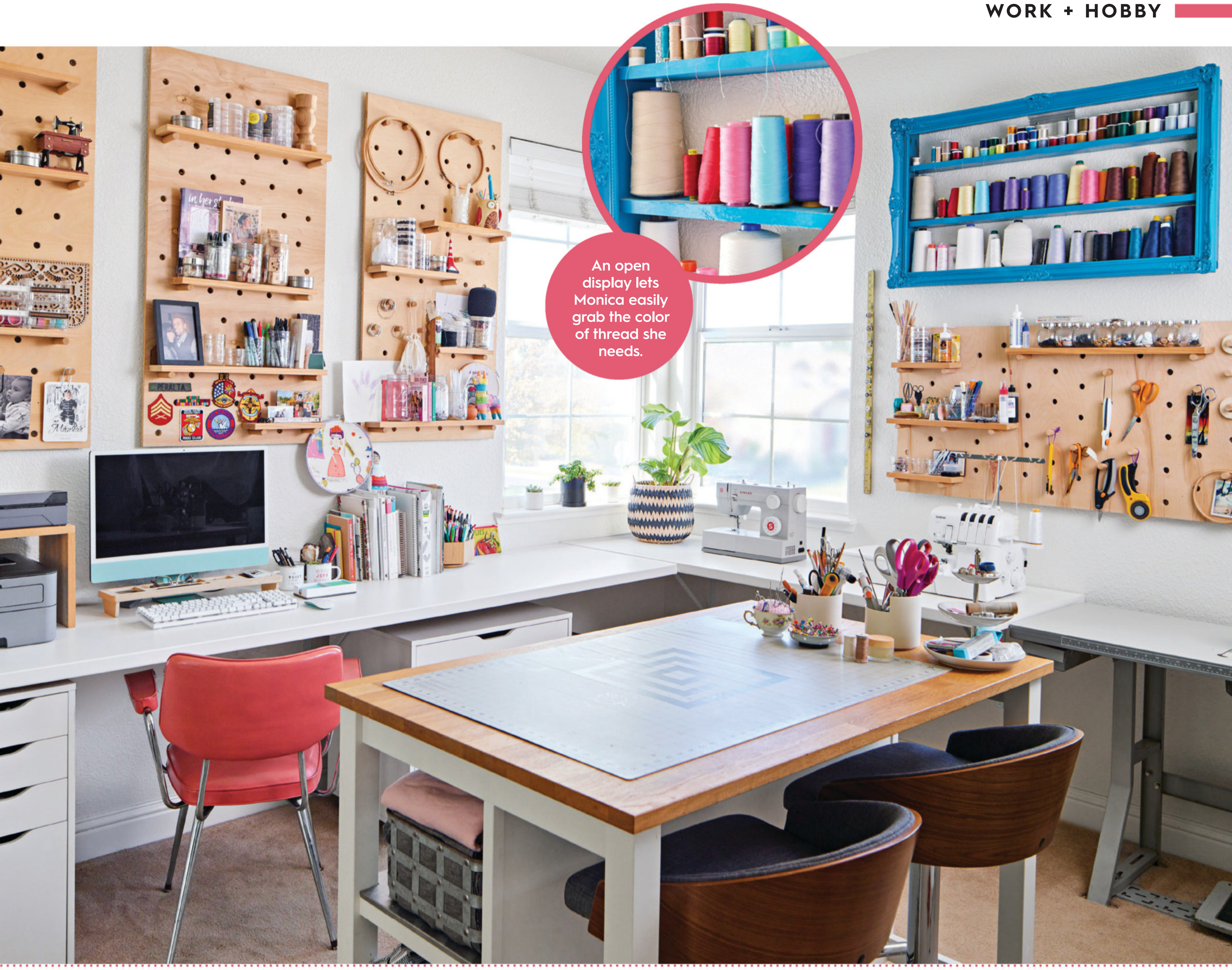


I'M KIND OF A BIG DEAL

BOOK NOOK

The three levels of built-in library shelves in the two-story room just off the entry, *above*, took Monica and Ruben two years to complete. “We did it during weekends while both working full-time jobs,” she says. They started with IKEA Billy bookcases, trimmed them with various moldings for a custom look, then finished the wall with lighting and a custom rolling ladder. “The library and entry are my ultimate DIY pride and joy,” says Monica, who now has a central spot for her large book collection. A Chesterfield sofa and a library card catalog complete the space, which is not off-limits to the kids or Great Dane Ivy.

During Día de Muertos, the Chavezes set up an ofrenda, or altar, next to the gallery wall.



An open display lets Monica easily grab the color of thread she needs.

> “Take your time, be resourceful, and if you don’t like something, it’s OK to change your mind. We’ve been in our home 8 years, and I’m still not done.”
>
> —HOMEOWNER MONICA CHAVEZ

HONOR THE PAST

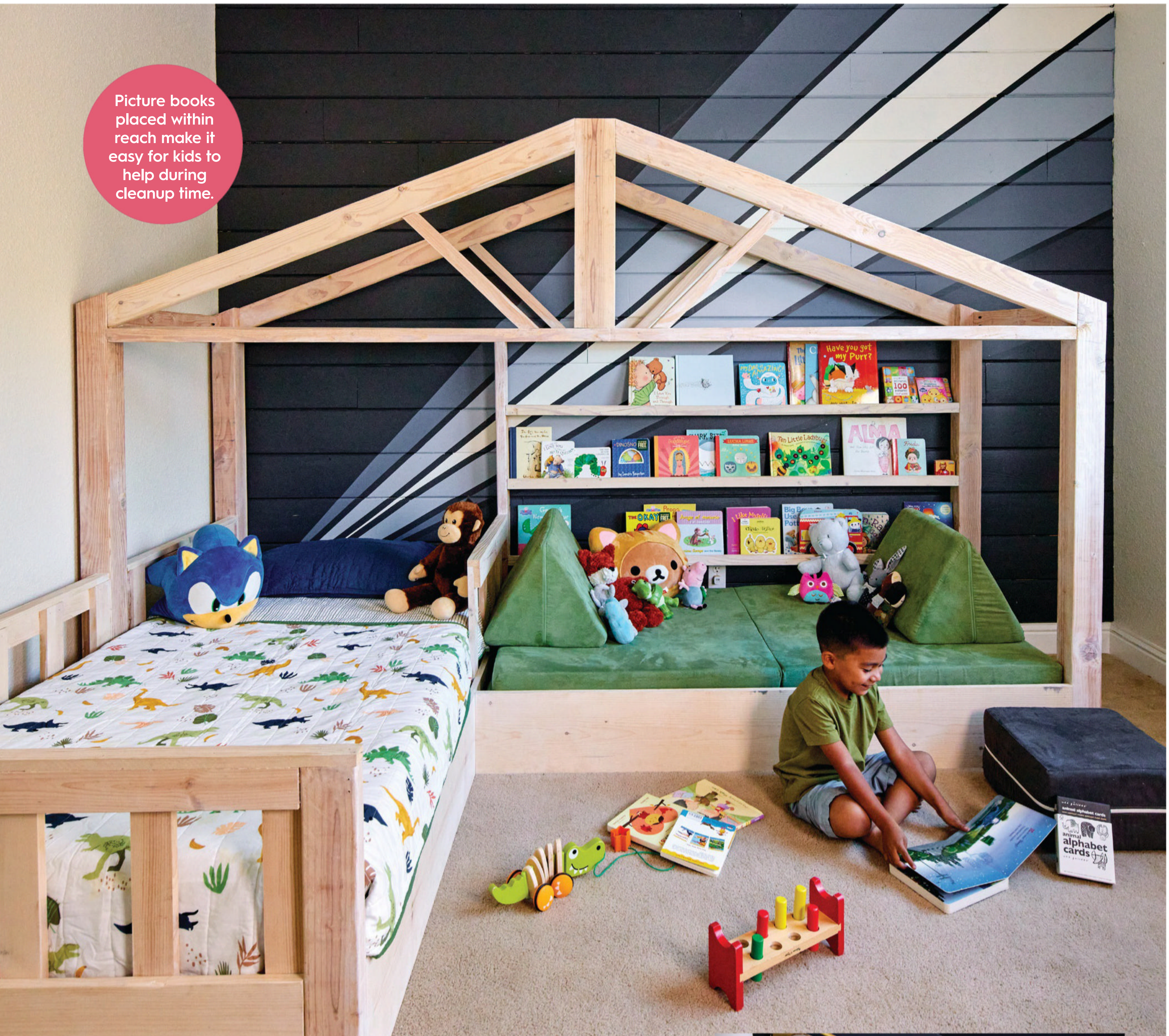
Monica hung a gallery of family photos adjacent to the library wall, *opposite*. “It’s a family tree of sorts and includes generations of both my husband’s and my family,” she says. “It’s a great topic of conversation and shows an appreciation of where we came from, especially for our kids,” she says.

CREATION STATION

In her office, *above*, Monica hung kitchen countertops along two walls to create an L-shape floating desk. “We mounted them to studs using heavy-duty brackets, which cleared the floor to store my craft supplies,” she says. Pegboards installed on the wall keep additional items within reach, while an island in the center of the room provides a standing desk to work, cut fabric, or craft with her kids.

SEW READY

This framed storage unit, *above* and *inset*, is the first project on which Monica used a nail gun—the beginning of a bountiful relationship. “I found a beautifully ornate gold-ish frame at an antiques fair and, because it wasn’t in good shape, I spray-painted it bright turquoise,” she explains. She then nailed narrow shelves to the inside of the frame to store spools of thread.



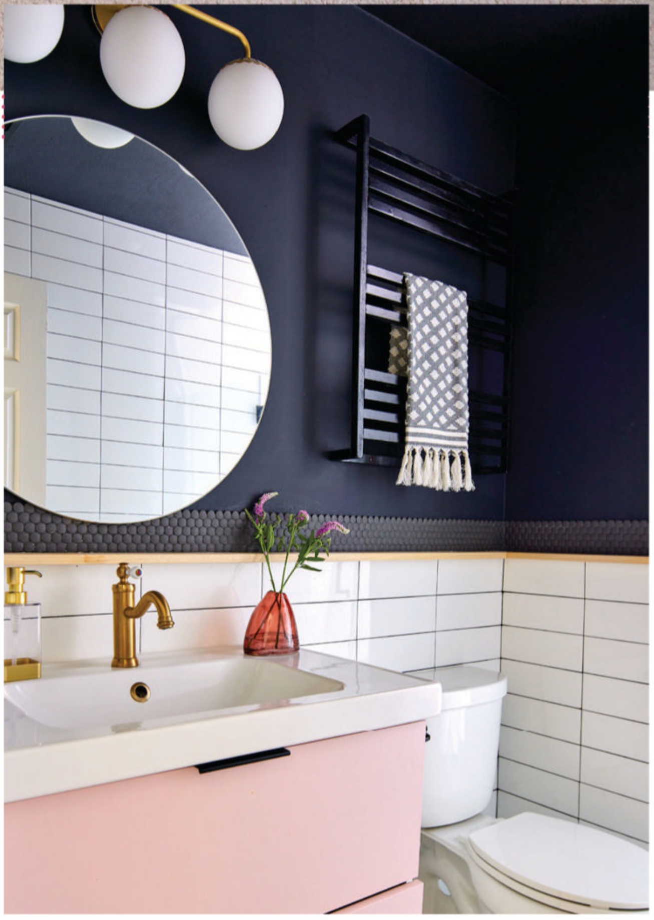
Picture books placed within reach make it easy for kids to help during cleanup time.

SWEET DREAMS

Providing a separate place for each of her kids to rest, play, read, and claim as their own was important to Monica. She built the structure in son Mauricio's room, *above*—which includes a twin-size mattress and sofa cushions that act as a bed during sleepovers—to look like a house. "Wood ledges over the daybed hold our current favorite books," she says.

BATHROOM REDO

"This bathroom was so drab when we moved in," Monica says. "We basically took it down to studs." White subway tile balances the matte black paint, *right*, while the new vanity got a coat of soft pink—"a feminine complement to all the black and white," she says. A towel warmer was out of the budget, so Monica built a wall rack and painted it a glossy black to resemble one.



PRETTY IN PINK

Monica wanted the design in daughter Essie's room, *below*, to grow with her. "I started by searching for a wall mural to place behind her crib," Monica says. Then she matched it to Behr's Victorian Mauve and added molding. "This was a 'this feels right' design moment for me," she says.

BE OUR GUEST

The guest room, *right*, was designed with sanctuary in mind. Black paint on the ceiling and tongue-and-groove wainscoting "creates an illusion of a larger space," Monica says. Floral wallpaper breaks up the dark hue. A wall-mount sconce frees up space on the nightstand.

IF WALLS COULD TALK

They'd ask for something more than just color. Monica Chavez uses wallpaper in almost every room and says you can too.

LOOK AROUND

"I use wallpaper on so much more than walls: ceilings, furniture, wall panels—you name it!" Monica says.

START SMALL

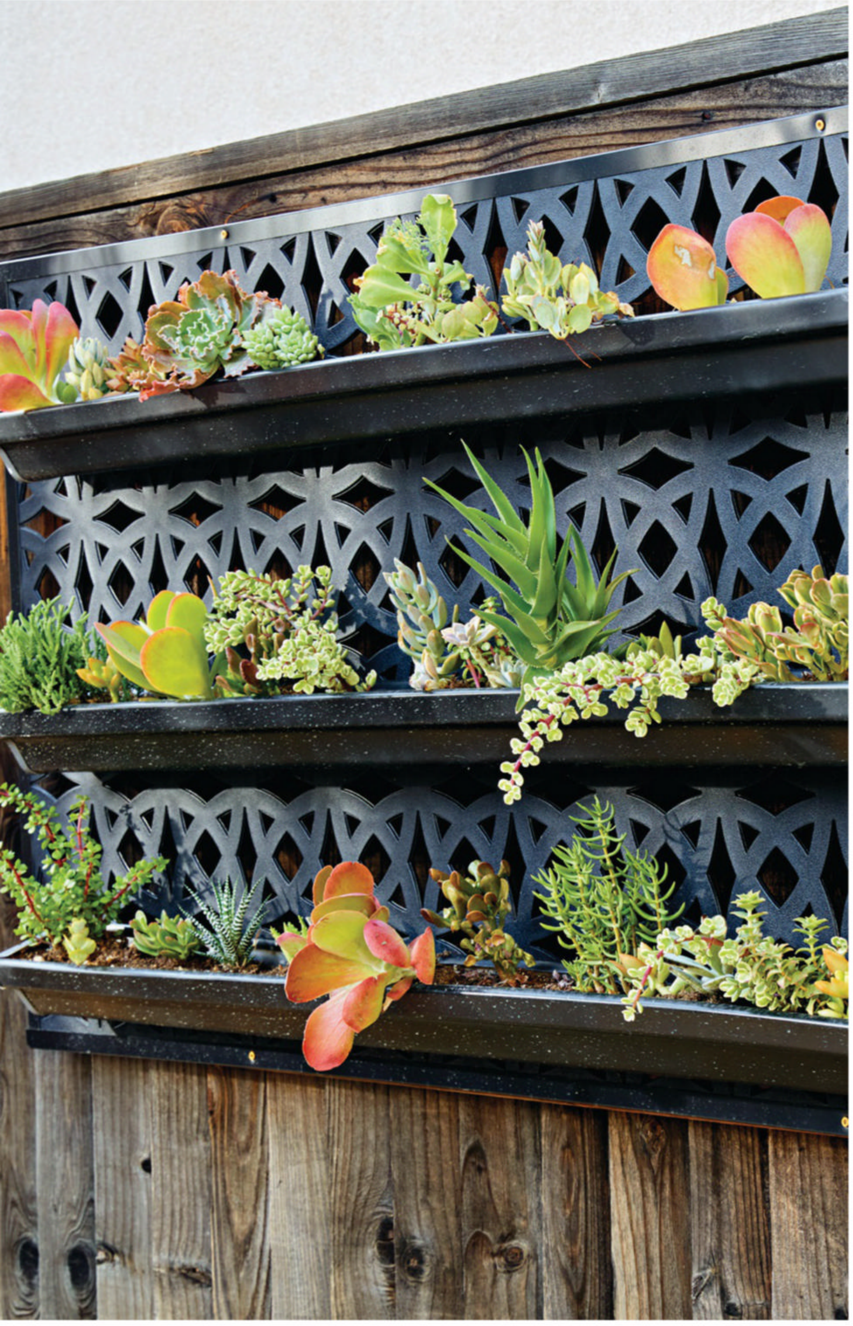
It's a great beginner and budget-friendly way to customize a tight space like an office or powder room. "I love to use wallpaper to bring in texture and pattern," she says.

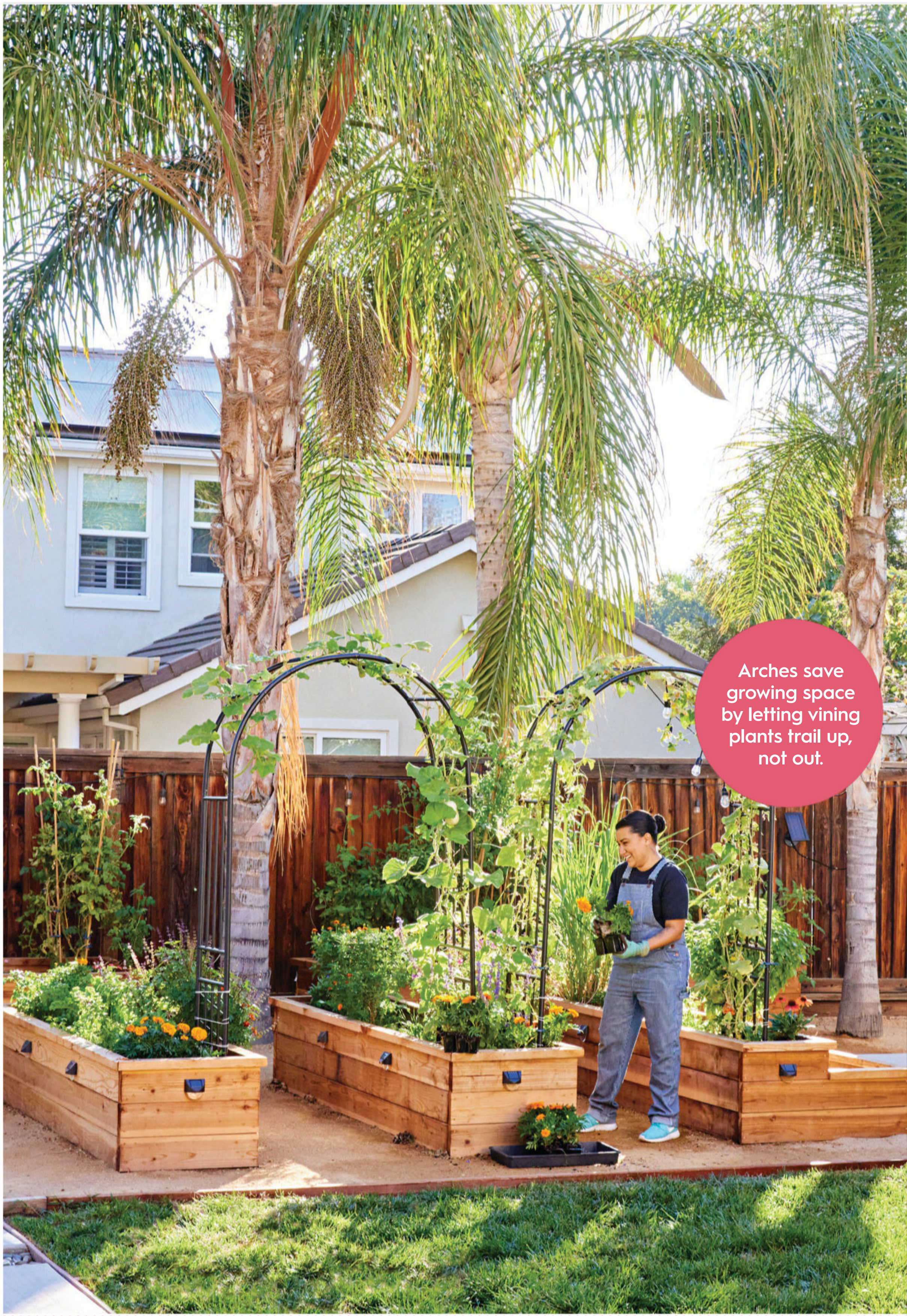
FIND WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

"I prefer unpasted wallpaper over pasted or peel-and-stick—it seems much more forgiving to work with," Monica says.

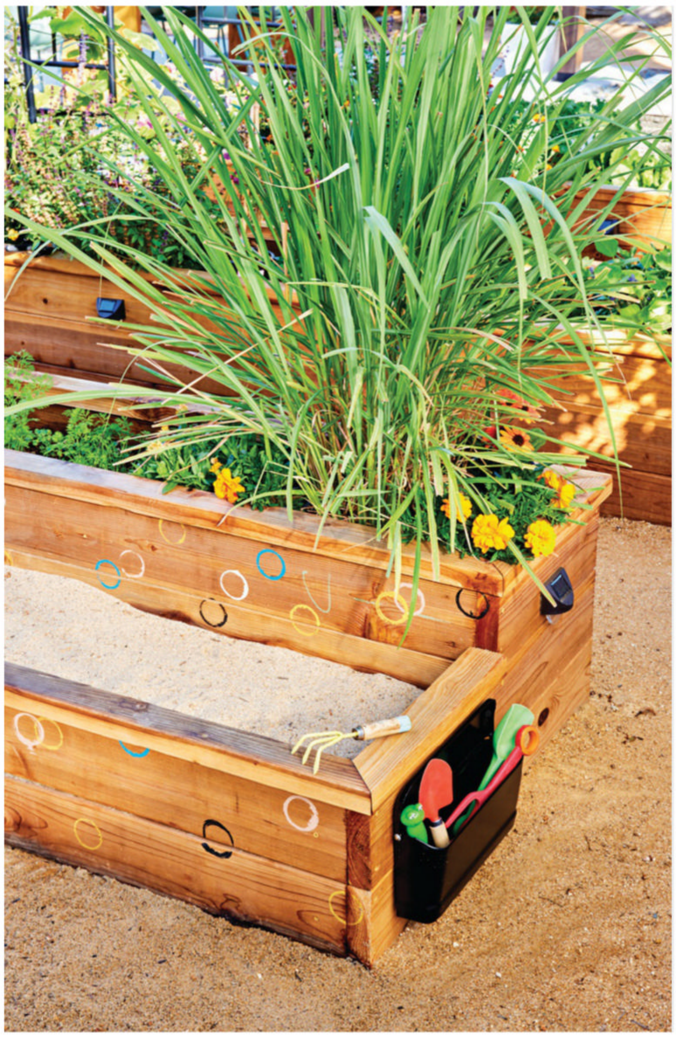
INSTALL LIKE A PRO

To maneuver around switches and outlets, Monica suggests cutting through the paper for a clean finish. Use painters tape to hold the tops and bottoms of panels while waiting for the adhesive to dry.





Arches save growing space by letting vining plants trail up, not out.

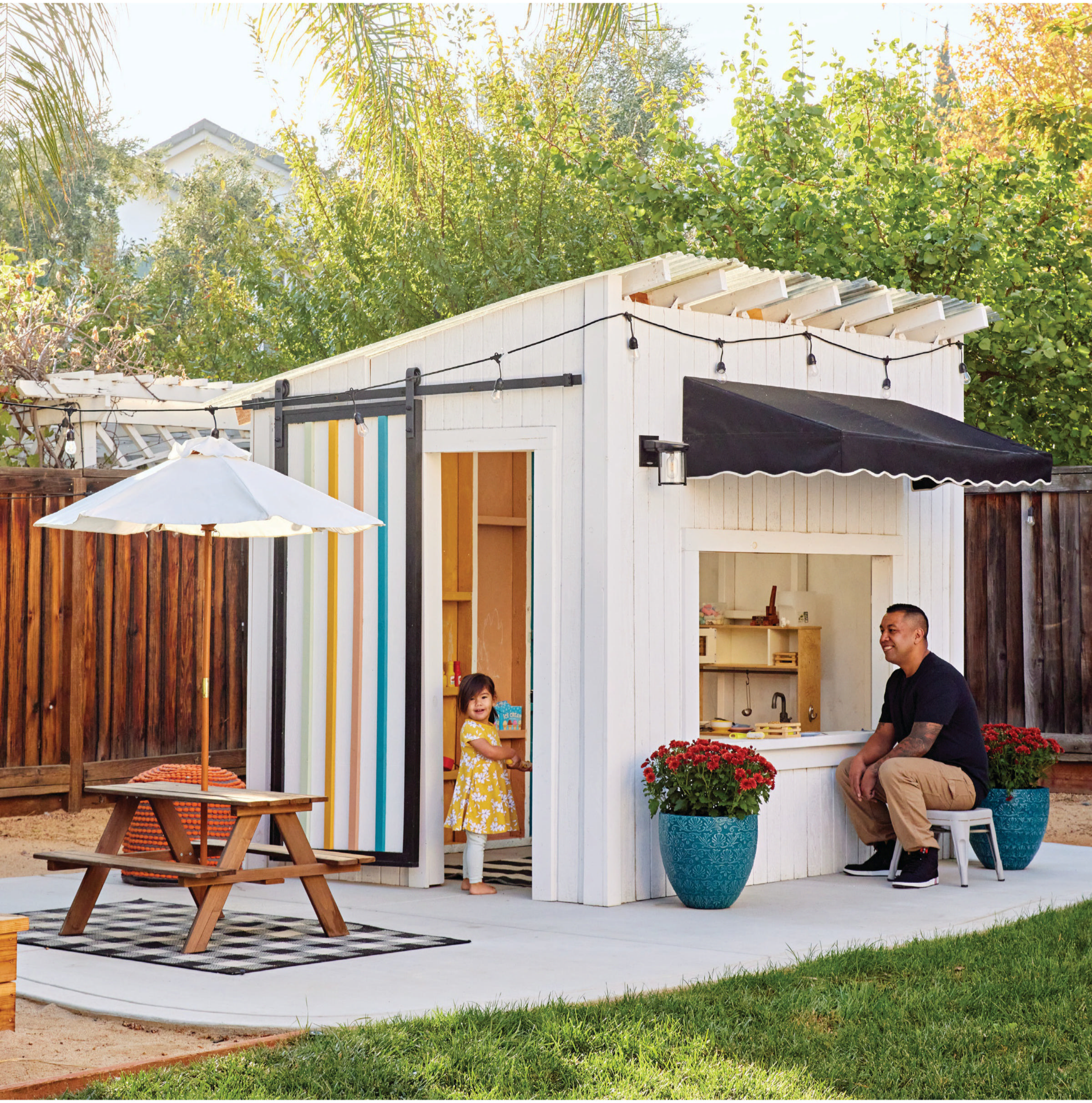


LIVING ART
An avid gardener, Monica converted her family's backyard from a large grass lawn into a zone-filled space to work and play. "I wanted to appreciate our California climate all year round," she says. A decorative fence panel supports gutters filled with succulents, *above left*.

MINI GARDENERS
A short raised bed filled with sand, *left*, allows the kids to dig all they want while Monica weeds or harvests vegetables nearby. A metal mailbox mounted at one end holds their play tools.

GROUND UP
Monica built large raised beds for veggies and herbs, *above*. "As a child, I learned to grow fruits and vegetables with my mom and grandma," she says. "Well-organized beds and arched trellises allow me to continue to learn." Now she plants seeds with her own kids.

MADE FOR FUN
Built with the help of family and friends, the playhouse, *below*, includes a striped barn door and an awning-topped window. Monica and Ruben situated it close to the garden so the kids can join in planting efforts and jump into playtime. “I wanted to give my kids a safe place to engage in imaginative play, become lost in their games, and get dirty,” Monica says.

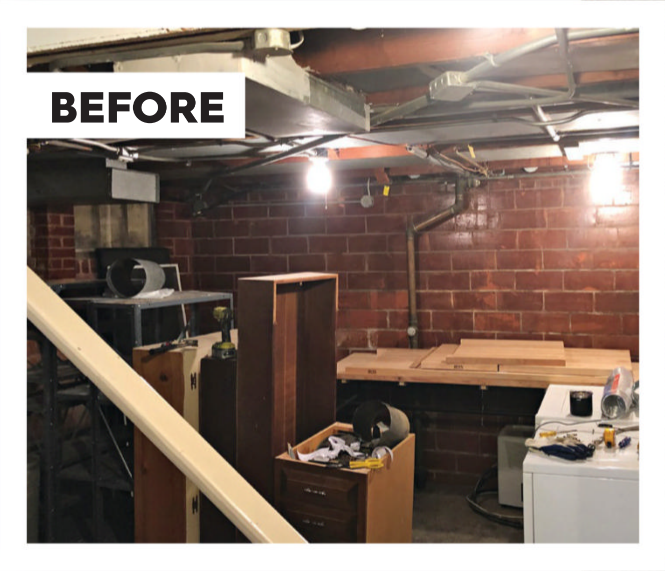


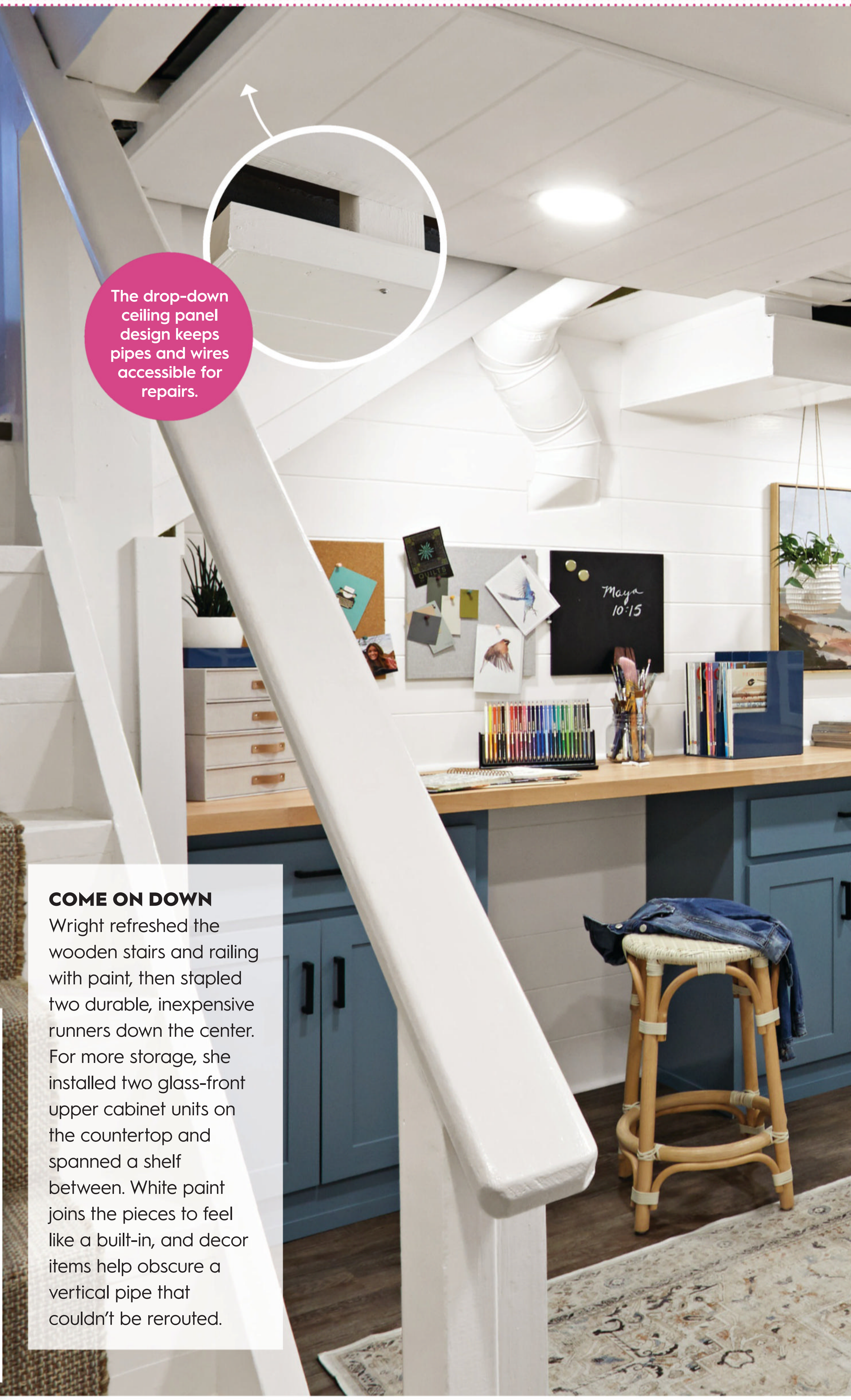
sorting the LAUNDRY

DARK, DREARY, AND LACKING ANY TYPE OF STORAGE, A LAUNDRY ROOM TUCKED IN THE CORNER OF A BASEMENT BEGGED FOR A REVAMP. Concrete block walls surrounded the washer and dryer, HVAC ducts and electrical wiring crisscrossed the ceiling, and cracked concrete covered the floor. But designer Jeni Wright had a vision for the unfinished—and some might say scary—space.

To hide the concrete walls, Wright attached paneling with construction adhesive, then painted the panels white. On the ceiling, she built drop-down panels to conceal wiring, ducts, and pipes while keeping them accessible. The panels—made of carsiding framed by 1x2-inch boards—are hung from 2x4s attached to the rafters (like an upside-down box lid, *inset, above*). LED can lights installed in the center of the panels brighten the room.

Plank vinyl flooring now covers the cracked concrete, while painted cabinetry and butcher-block countertops surround the room. Consider laundry day no longer quite the chore.



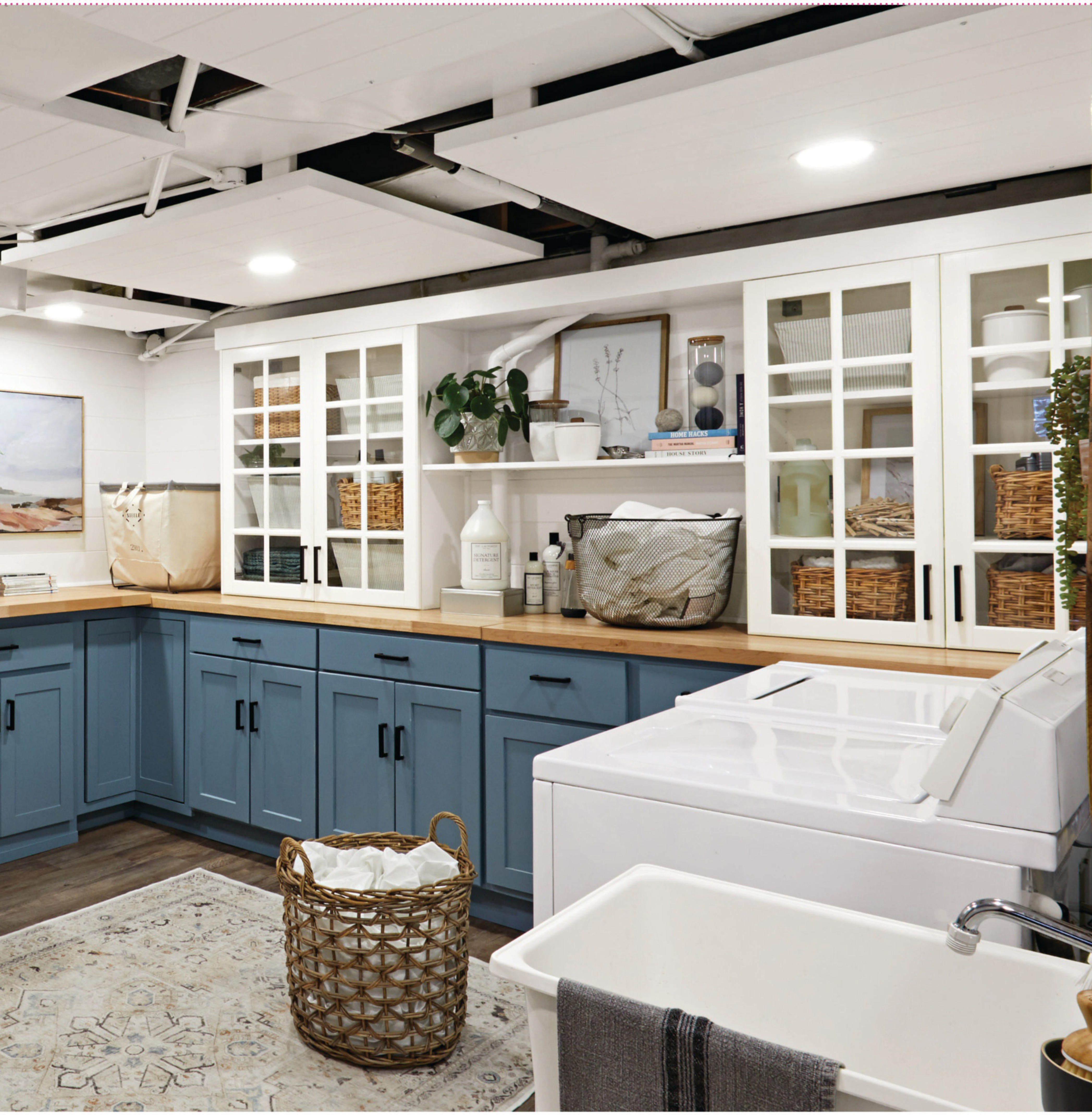


The drop-down ceiling panel design keeps pipes and wires accessible for repairs.

COME ON DOWN Wright refreshed the wooden stairs and railing with paint, then stapled two durable, inexpensive runners down the center. For more storage, she installed two glass-front upper cabinet units on the countertop and spanned a shelf between. White paint joins the pieces to feel like a built-in, and decor items help obscure a vertical pipe that couldn't be rerouted.

Thrifted cabinets, fresh paint, and plywood panels provide the finishing touches for this laundry area in an unfinished basement.

WRITER **SARAH HALVERSON** PRODUCER **JENI WRIGHT** PHOTOGRAPHER **JACOB FOX**



WARM & *WELCOMING*

DESIGNER JENI WRIGHT SHARES TIPS FOR SOFTENING A COLD, UNFINISHED BASEMENT.

1 ADD COLOR

A gallon or two of paint goes a long way when refreshing walls and ceilings. Use it to unify disparate elements, such as mismatched cabinets, or to disguise pipes and ducts.

2 HIDE THE "UGLY" STUFF

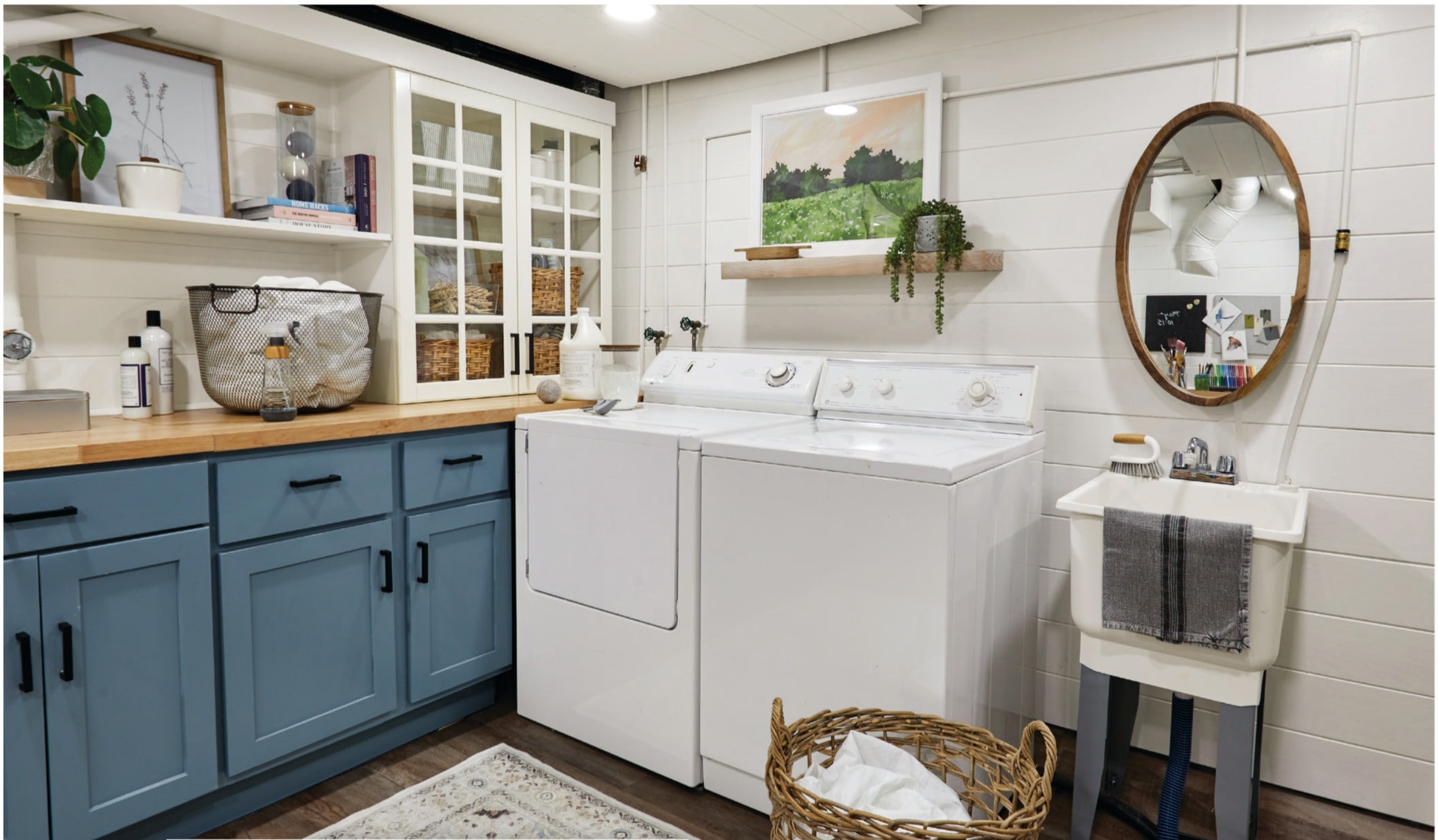
Wires, pipes, and ducts tend to line laundry rooms and other utilitarian spaces—and can look like a busy jumble. When possible, reroute these elements. Wright moved ducts and electrical closer to the ceiling for better clearance below. Other items that couldn't move were concealed with paneling, artwork, or paint.

3 MAKE IT MULTIPURPOSE

If you have the square footage, include a small desk, crafts area, or workbench to give your space dual purpose. Add extra cabinets and shelves to stash overflow from the kitchen, bathrooms, and pantry.

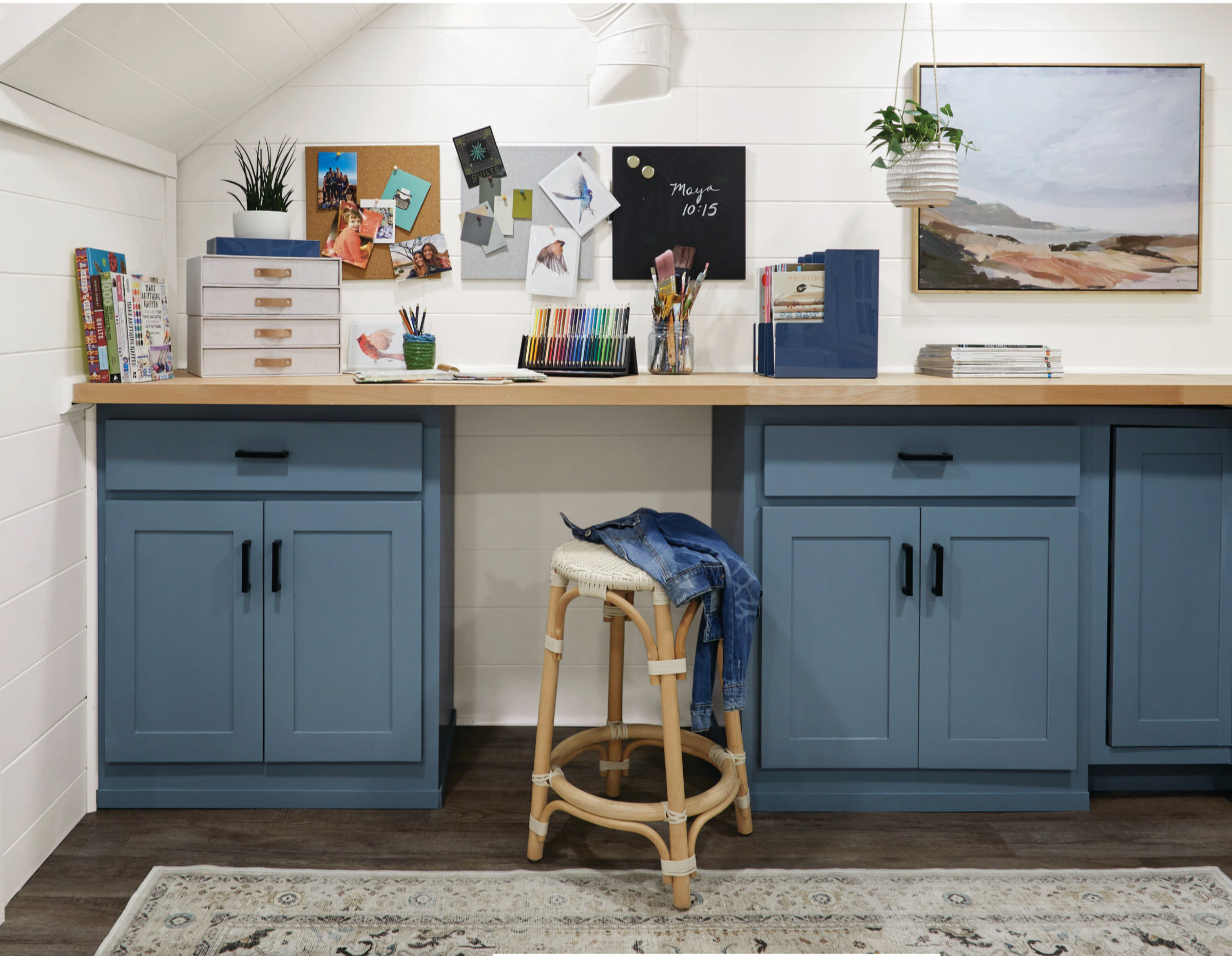
4 DECORATE

A rug, artwork, and artificial plants make even the barest basement feel homier. "Use finishes and surfaces that you would typically find on the main level—like in a kitchen—to tie the room to the rest of the house," Wright says. "If you make the laundry room more pleasant to be in, you'll want to do more things in there."



SIMPLE TOUCHES
To shield (but not block) a floor drain, Wright placed a utility sink over the hole, *top*. A washable rug brings pattern into the room and comfort underfoot. To dress up the wall over the appliances and pull focus away from the electrical wires and pipes, Wright installed a floating shelf to display artwork and a mirror.

MORE STORAGE
Cabinets sourced from both a friend who was remodeling and a local Habitat for Humanity ReStore line two walls to amp up the room's storage, *right*. Wright painted all the lower cabinets a dusty blue and the upper cabinets white to match the walls, then replaced hardware with modern black pulls for a cohesive look.

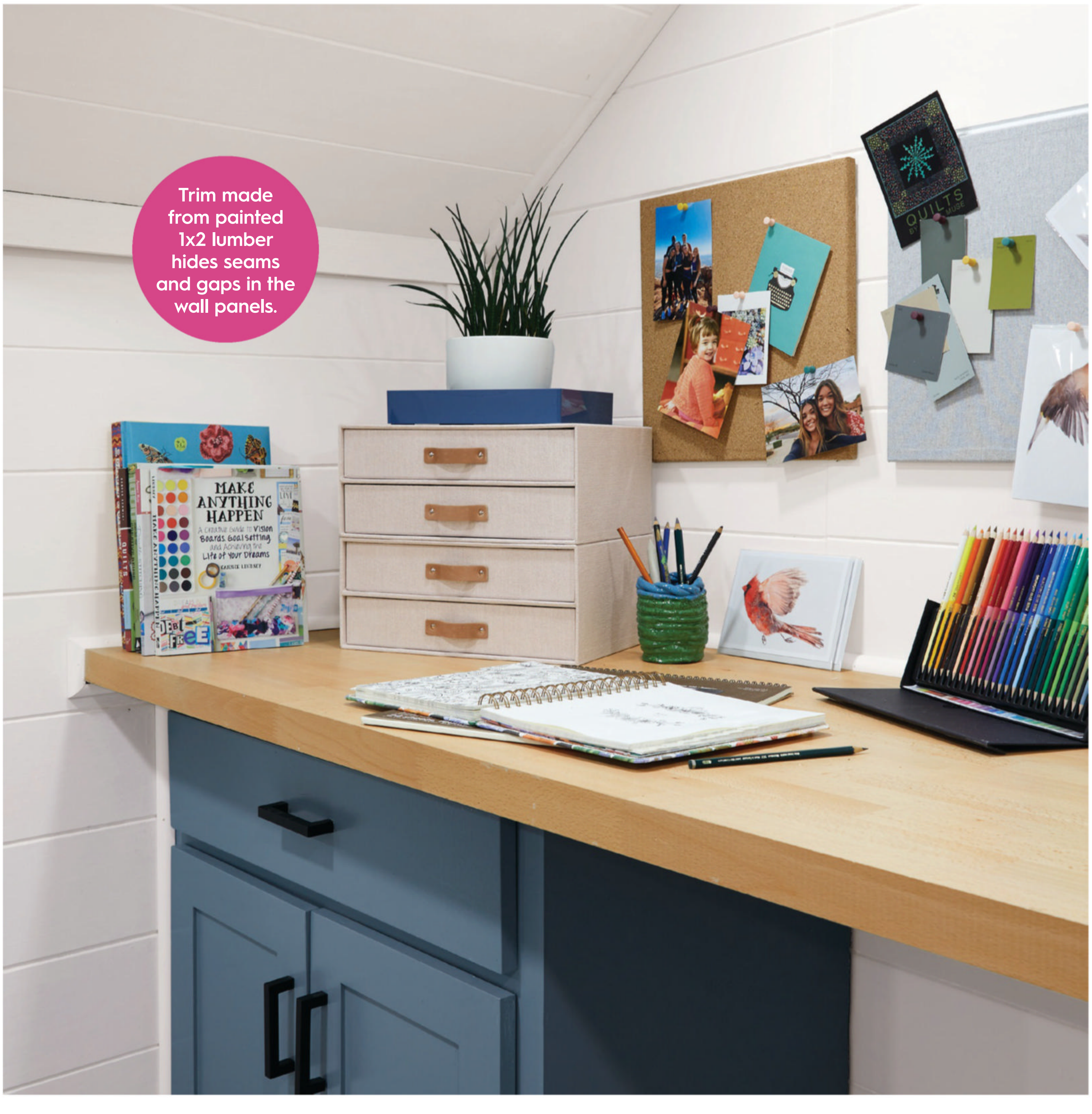


ART CORNER Where the ceiling slants and an air duct gobbles up wall space, Wright slipped in a small desk, *above*—just the right spot for a workspace and stool that snugs under the counter.

> “With paint and the right decor, a laundry room can feel like an extension of your living space.”
>
> —DESIGNER JENI WRIGHT

EXTRA GOODS Bulletin boards and a magnetic chalkboard hang above the desk, *below* and *opposite*. A small set of drawers rests on the counter to stash away paper and office supplies.

TOP IT OFF The butcher-block countertops—another lucky find from the Habitat for Humanity ReStore—are sealed with a water-base varnish to protect against water and stains, *below*.

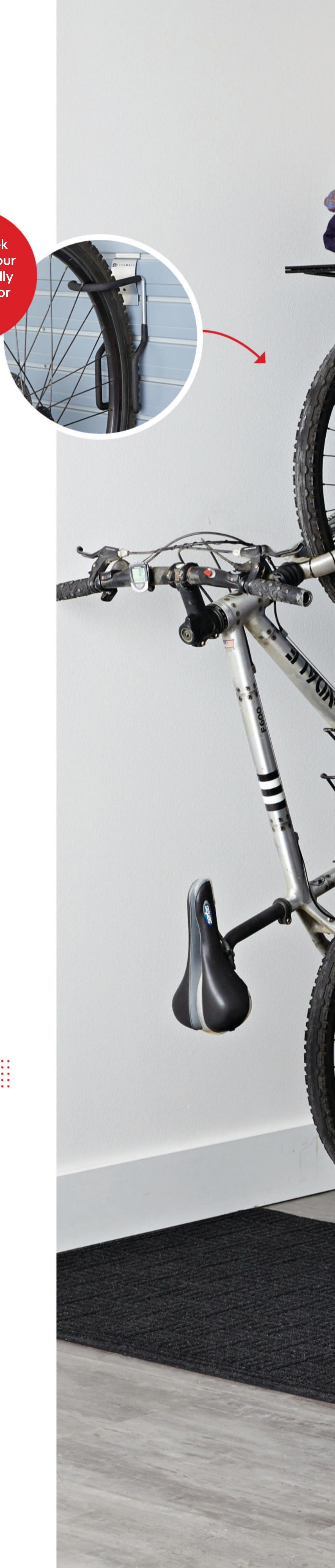


Trim made from painted 1x2 lumber hides seams and gaps in the wall panels.

GET IN *gear*

A slat storage system with hooks, shelves, and bins gives sporting equipment a spot to rest between game days.

WRITER **SAMANTHA S. THORPE** PHOTOGRAPHER **MARTY BALDWIN** PRODUCER **LESLIE POYZER**

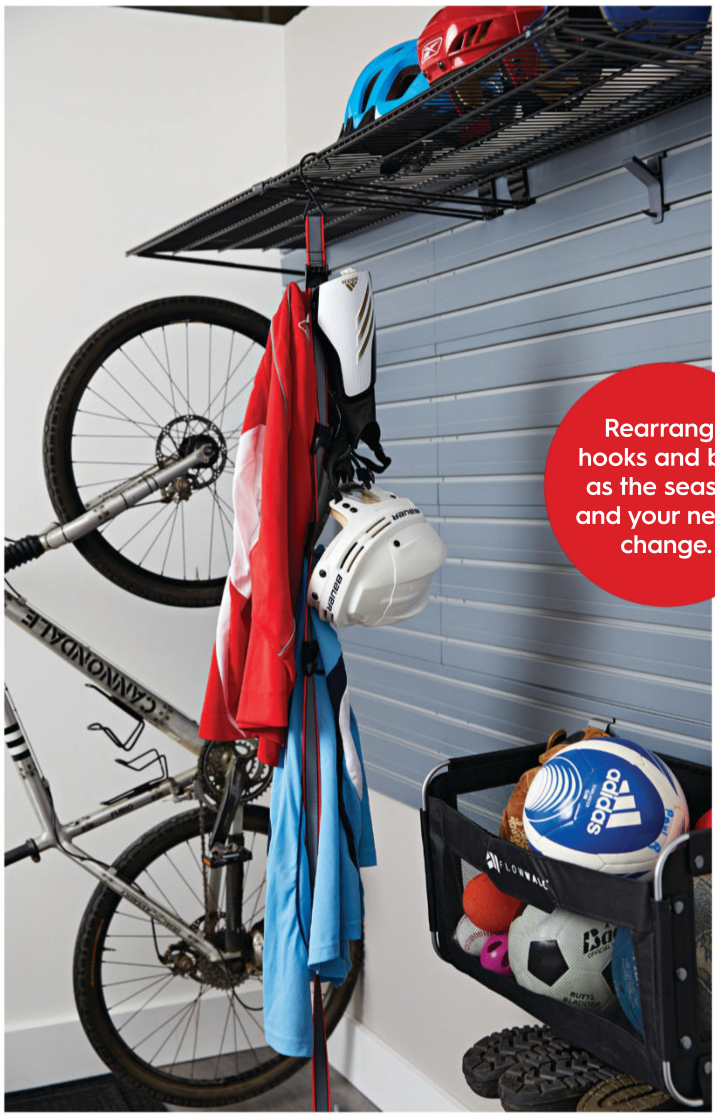


A bike hook suspends your ride vertically to save floor space.

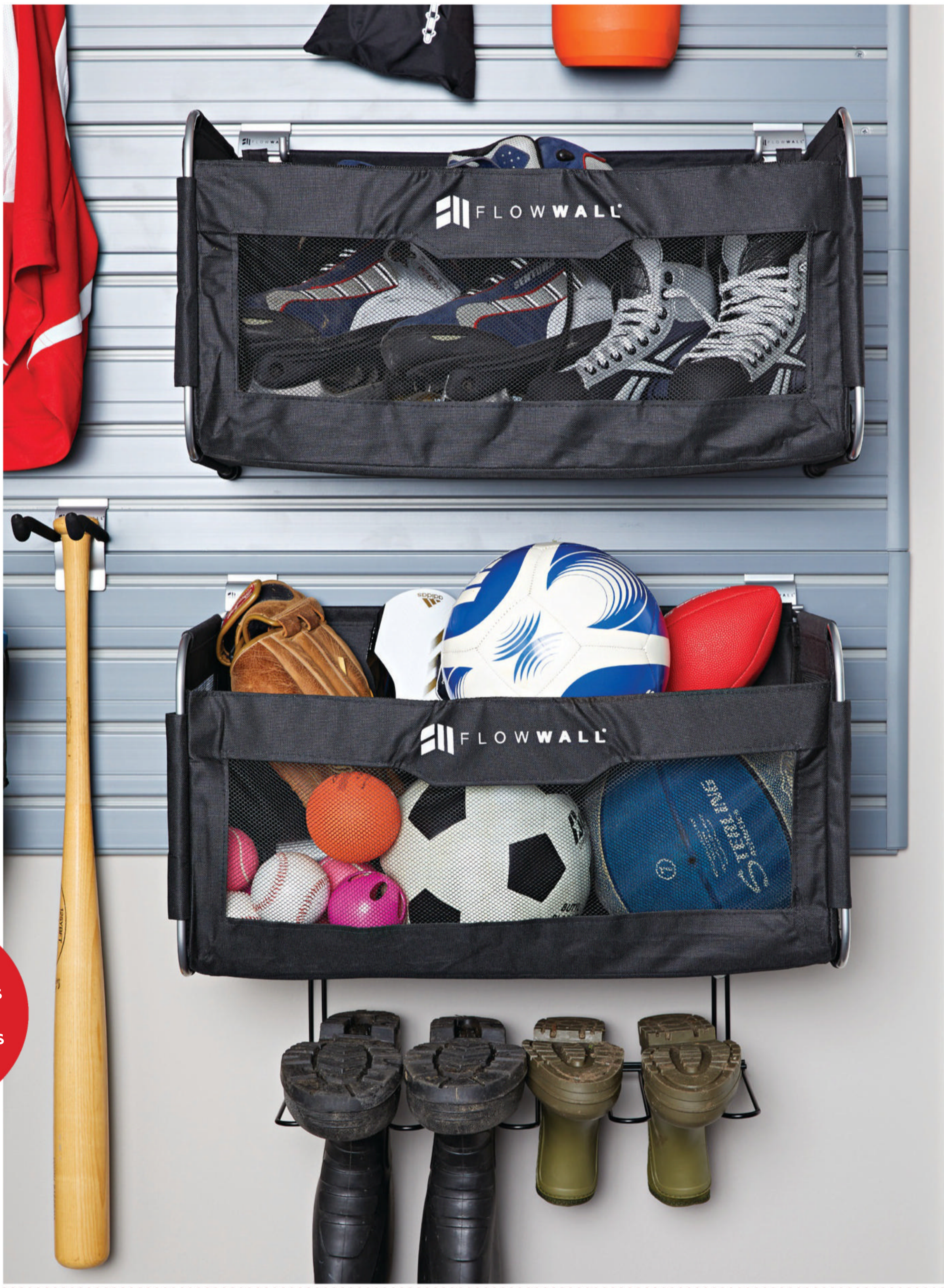
HANG TIME

If bikes, helmets, and picnic blankets scatter across your garage (or even the back of your car), consider converting a wall into an equipment storage zone. A customizable slat system lets you use untapped vertical space, and the best part is that you can install it in a weekend. (This is the Flow Wall from Lowe's.) Each panel can cut to a preferred size to fill an entire wall or make the most of a small, ignored corner; it then screws into wall studs. And because the panels hold 100 pounds per square foot, you don't need to shy away from hanging heavy items.

EASTON
FLOWWALL
adidas
FLOWWALL



Rearrange hooks and bins as the season and your needs change.



HOLD ON

Reconfigure hooks along the wall to store seasonal equipment, *above left*. A two-prong hook keeps bags or bats off the ground and within reach.

AIR DRY

Give athletic gear a compact place to dry before storing, *left*. Attach this 5-foot strap from a shelf and use the hooks to hang damp jerseys, shin guards, towels, or helmets (Utty Strap, $30; *amazon.com*). Pack it into its carrying bag when done to take on trips for a vertical drying rack.

STOW AWAY

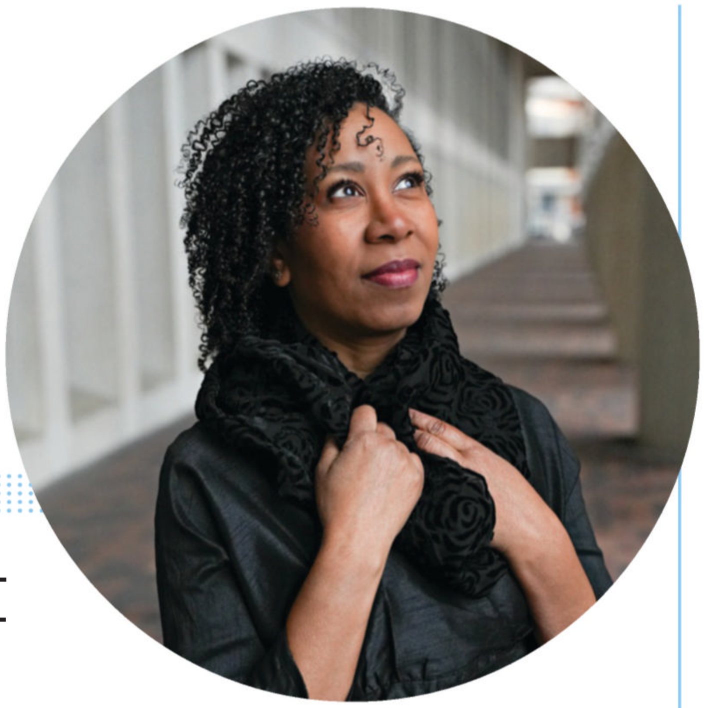
Drop hard-to-contain equipment like skates and balls in one of the large nylon mesh Flow Wall baskets, *above*. The open design helps air out items to reduce the chance of mildew.

MORE TO STORE
Complete a slat wall with versatile wire shelving, *left*. Install shelves high to stash seasonal helmets, blankets, or less frequently used items.

The metal hooks stay put by clicking into the grooves in the slat wall.

SHOE STORAGE
Keep muck and grass from heading inside the house. A 34-inch-long, 2-inch-deep tray, *right,* collects water from dripping footwear (Birdrock Home Rubber Boot Tray with Coir Insert, $50; *amazon .com*). Remove the fiber liner to shake off dried debris. Mount a boot rack over the tray to corral waders and work shoes (Rack'Em Boot Wader Rack, $20; *amazon.com*).

Kay PATTERSON



A BOSTON NATIVE AND CLASSICAL MUSICIAN TURNED PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZER HELPS CLIENTS BRING NEW RHYTHM TO CLEANING AND ORGANIZING PROJECTS.

How do you find motivation when decluttering feels overwhelming? Start with a vision and a plan. Ask yourself: What is the problem I'm trying to solve? Where is the nearest donation center? When do I plan to go there?

Where's the best place to start when organizing? Think small, like a kitchen drawer, before tackling something bigger, like a closet or family photos, which can hold personal attachments.

What's your "let it go" policy? Consider these questions: Do I have a specific time and occasion to use this? If I didn't own this, would I buy it? Am I only holding on to this because it's expensive or was a gift? Remember, we can't keep everything. Items are not people, even if they remind us of them.

How do you depart with stuff? I like "Everything Free" groups on social media, because I know the item will get used and people can pick up stuff directly from my porch. I also dedicate an "outbox" near our front door to put anything we no longer need.

> "Forget about not knowing what you're doing—just start. **DONE IS BETTER THAN PERFECT EVERY TIME."**
>
> **—PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZER KAY PATTERSON**

GET MORE TIPS

Follow Kay (aka The Organized Soprano) on YouTube and Instagram or her website, *theorganizedsoprano.com*.

LIGHTNING ROUND

Favorite decluttering hack
Don't stop to return misplaced items to other rooms. Stay focused by making a pile for later.

Go-to organizing music
Ironically, I'm more of a podcast person.

The last thing I donated
A whole lot of clothes I no longer vibe with.

Something I'd never donate
My video game consoles!

Cleaning or organizing?
Cleaning. Organizing requires more brain power.

Labels or no labels?
No labels if it's see-through. Labels if it's not or looks like something else (salt vs. sugar).

Most rewarding project
My spice drawer. Every time I open it, I smile.

MY CLEANING & DECLUTTERING MUST-HAVES

1

2

3

4

1 **PACKING CUBES**
"These make traveling so much easier. Once you get to your destination, place the cube directly in the dresser for an instant drawer organizer."

2 **TURNTABLES**
"The back of a cabinet is where things go to die. These let you see and use forgotten items."

3 **MODULAR CLOSET SYSTEM**
"It's like LEGO for organizing freaks. We've taken our Elfa shelving from home to home because they're easy to install and so versatile."

4 **2-IN-1 ROBOT VACUUM**
"We have a dog and the hair upkeep is never-ending. We invested in the Roomba Combo j9+, which vacuums and mops in one cycle. It's a game changer!" $1,400; *irobot.com*

WRITER **KRISTIN GRANERO**

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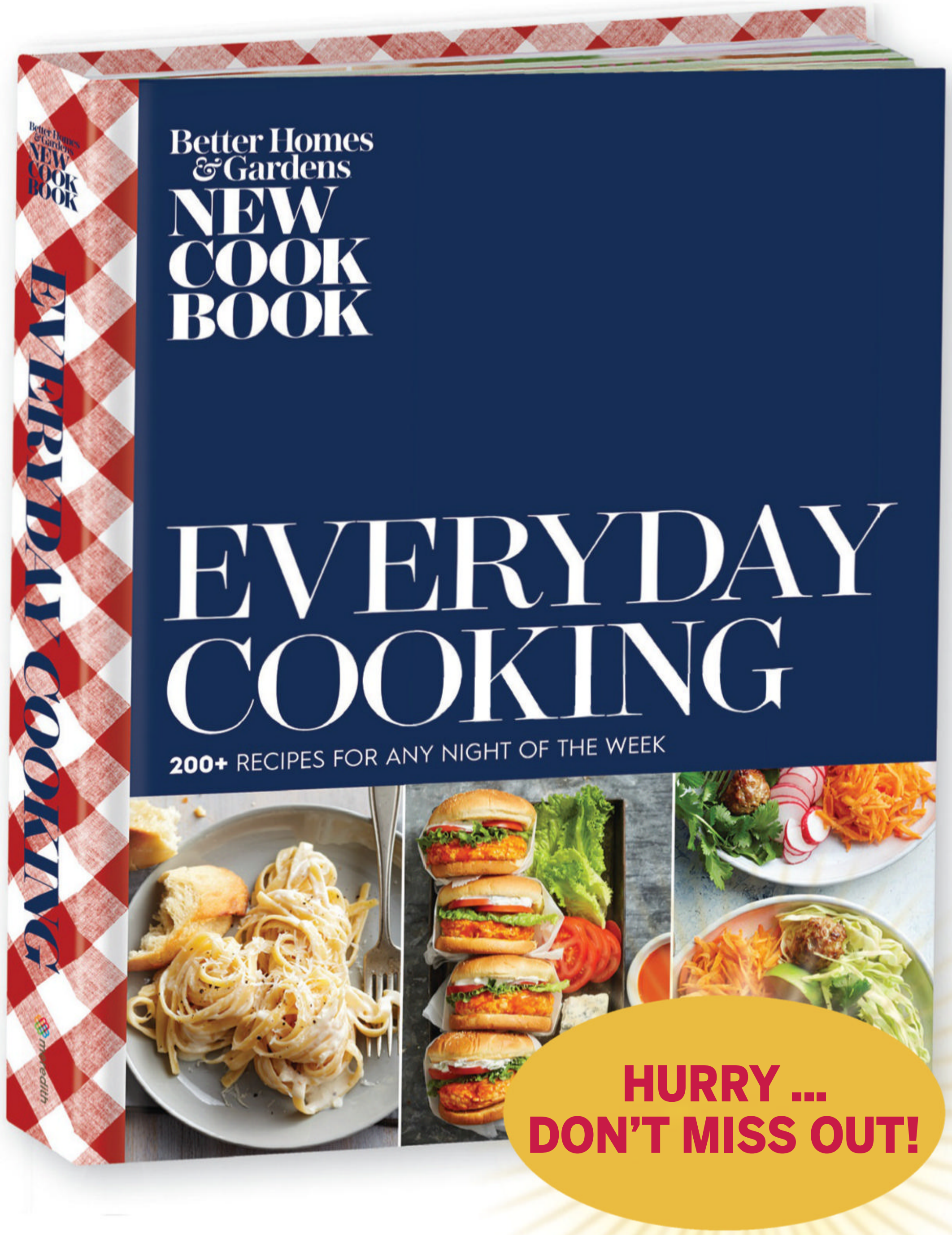
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